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## Happy New Year 2024

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#ChooseHappiness

### 4 cops injured in Manipur attack

Suspected militants attacked a police outpost in Manipur's Moreh bordering Myanmar on Sunday, leaving four police commandos wounded. A village guard was also injured in a blast in Imphal East district. **P10**

### City EV subsidy to be extended till March

The Delhi government has decided to extend its electric vehicles policy — it spells out subsidies for different categories of EVs — for another three months. **P2**

### Packaged items to display price/unit

From Monday, manufacturers and importers of packaged items will have to mention the price of products per unit as well as the overall MRP on packets. **P13**

### 6 workers killed in Pune factory fire

At least six workers were killed in a fire at a glove and safety equipment manufacturing unit in Maharashtra's Waluj industrial area early on Sunday. **P12**

### Amid ship attacks, Navy boosts sea vigil

Amid surge in ship attacks, Navy has deployed task groups comprising destroyers and a frigate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden & Arabian Sea to foil such attacks. **P12**

## FAREWELL, AND A LEAP INTO 2024



ON THE WATERFRONT: People enjoy the year's last sunset on a beach in Mumbai on New Year's eve

### 'Donkey flight': 2-year-old flyer missing, probe on

Amidst the unfolding saga of the "donkey flight" grounded in France, one flyer stood out — a two-year-old boy from Gujarat. The unaccompanied minor is now untraceable. Gujarat police have launched a probe to locate the child. Amid efforts to capture the mastermind of the flight, MEA data sheds light on prevalence of nearly 3,000 such unscrupulous agents across India, exploiting job-seekers aspiring to work abroad. **FLAP OPP**

## Entire country is excited over Ram Mandir: PM

New Delhi: PM Modi, in the 108th edition of his 'Mann Ki Baat' on Sunday, said there was excitement and enthusiasm in the entire country in connection with the Ram mandir as he called it a "historic moment" and urged people to share artistic creations by using a common hashtag, reports Akhilesh Singh. The PM emphasised the special edition as '108', an auspicious number as per Hindu belief, as he mentioned the excitement surrounding the temple

and said, "People are expressing their feelings in a multitude of ways." Citing feats that the country attained in 2023, including the passage of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, India becoming the fifth largest economy and success at the G20 summit, the PM said every corner of India was brimming with self-confidence, imbued with the spirit of a developed India and the spirit of self-reliance.

► 'Think of India first', P 14

## No 'cold day' as city logs warmest Dec in 6 years

Both Day & Night Temps Higher Than Normal

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New Delhi: Delhi recorded its warmest December in six years and the only time during this period when both the mean maximum temperature and the mean minimum were above normal. This was also the first December since 2017, again six years ago, when the city did not log a single 'cold day' or 'cold wave' day. The was the first mild De-

### CHILLY START TO YR?

24.1°C Mean max temp in Dec 2023 (normal 22.8°C)	8.6°C Mean min temp (normal 8.4°C)
► First time in 6 yrs, no 'cold day' or 'cold wave' in Dec	
► No rain recorded during the month	
► New Year Day may see 'cold day' conditions at some places	

cember in the city after a five-year run of relatively harsh weather during the last month of the year. During this period, December saw the average maximum temperature plunge to 18.7 degrees C in

### This Dec most polluted in 5 yrs

This year was more polluted than 2022, recording an average daily PM2.5 concentration of 100 µg/m3 against 98 last time. With average AQI of 348, December 2023 was the most polluted in the past five years. The first half was cleaner but winter saw higher pollution levels. **P2**

2019, a 22-year low, when 18 'cold days' were recorded. In 2018, the mean minimum in December dropped to a 13-year low of 6.7 degrees C.

► Avg max temp, P 2

### Panagariya, 1st chief of Niti, to head fin panel

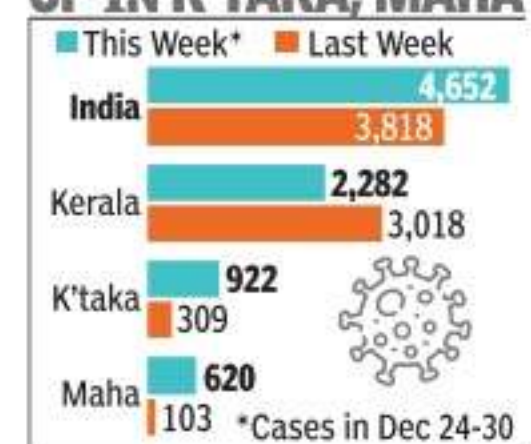
Columbia University professor and the first Niti Aayog vice-chairman Arvind Panagariya has been appointed the chairman of the 16th Finance Commission. The last four commissions were headed by those with long stints in the finance ministry or RBI. Panagariya is currently the Jagdish Bhagwati professor of Indian political economy and professor of economics and director of Raj Center on Indian Economic Policies. **P15**

## Covid cases rise 22% in a wk, Kerala numbers fall

India recorded a 22% rise in Covid cases this week as compared to the last, with the tally in the past 24 hours crossing 800 for the first time in seven months, reports Amit Bhattacharya.

While the overall numbers remain very low and the rise has been gradual — possibly because of sparse testing and a large number of cases remaining mild — data shows that the JN.1-driven surge is spreading across the country and that infections may already have

### UP IN K'TAKA, MAHA



peaked in Kerala, the state logging the highest counts in the current phase.

► Daily tally 841, P 14

### Geelani outfit 'unlawful' for 5 yrs: Centre

The Centre on Sunday designated the Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, J&K, founded in 2004 by pro-Pakistan Hurriyat 'hawk' Syed Ali Shah Geelani, as an 'unlawful association' for a five-year period under UAPA. Home minister Amit Shah said Teh was involved in "forbidden activities to separate J&K from India and establish Islamic rule in the UT". **P10**

### Delhi's own 'mini-Telgi scam' busted, 13 held

This could be Delhi's own 'mini-Telgi scam'. Delhi Police is learnt to have busted a massive racket involving designing, printing and supplying of fake stamp papers in a clandestine operation, which lasted six months and led to the arrest of 13 people in raids across six states. **P5**

### BJP IT cell duo among 3 held in IIT-BHU gang rape

Two members of BJP's IT cell in Varanasi were among three people arrested late Saturday and identified as the alleged perpetrators of the November 2 gang rape of a B.Tech student of IIT-BHU. The three young men have confessed to the crime, police said on Sunday. **P10**



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For conjurers, snake charmers and puppeteers at Kathputli Colony, shift to new home a pipedream | 9

15.9°

MAXIMUM

11.7°

MINIMUM

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky. Maximum and minimum temperatures will be around 16°C and 8°C

SUNRISE 7.14AM (TUE)

SUNSET 5.36PM (MON)

MOONRISE 10.26PM (MON)

MOONSET 11.18AM (TUE)

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI

MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024

CBSE to begin annual pre-exam psychological counselling today | 8

382

AQI IN DELHI ON SUNDAY (VERY POOR CATEGORY)

MCD, traders to move SC as de-sealing hangs fire | 8

# Foul Play: Most Polluted December In 5 Yrs

Year More Polluted Than 2022 In Terms Of Avg PM2.5 Levels

## Average maximum temperature in Dec was 2°C higher than normal

### THAT CHOKING SENSATION

**PM10 and PM2.5 concentrations**

■ Daily avg PM10 (µg/m<sup>3</sup>) ■ Daily avg PM2.5 (µg/m<sup>3</sup>)

Year	Daily avg PM10 (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )	Daily avg PM2.5 (µg/m <sup>3</sup> )
2018	242	114
2019	217	108
2020	180	94
2021	210	104
2022	211	98
2023	205	100

**CONCENTRATION RANGE**

PM10 ■ 0-50 ■ 51-100 ■ 101-250 ■ 251-350 ■ 351-430 ■ 430+ PM2.5 ■ 0-30 ■ 31-60 ■ 61-90 ■ 91-120 ■ 121-250 ■ 250+

► Annual National ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) for PM2.5 | 50 micrograms per cubic metre

► WHO's annual safe limit for PM2.5 | 15 micrograms per cubic metre

► Annual National ambient air quality standard (NAAQS) for PM10 | 60 micrograms per cubic metre

► WHO's annual safe limit for PM10 | 15 micrograms per cubic metre

Photo: Sanjeev Rastogi

**Average AQI for Delhi in December**

Year	Average AQI
2018	360
2019	337
2020	332
2021	336
2022	319
2023	348

**Daily avg AQI for Delhi during the entire year**

Year	Daily avg AQI
2018	225
2019	215
2020	185
2021	209
2022	209
2023	204

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**New Delhi:** This year was more polluted than the one before, recording an average daily PM2.5 concentration of 100 micrograms per cubic metre against 98 in 2022.

With an average AQI of 348, December 2023 was the most polluted in the past five years. In December 2018, a higher AQI of 360 was recorded.

Though the first half of the year was cleaner than earlier years, winter in 2023 saw higher pollution levels.

The PM2.5 concentration in 2023 was 2.5 times higher than the annual national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS) and 20 times higher than

the annual WHO safe limit.

This year saw the average daily PM10 level of 205 micrograms per cubic metre, making it the second lowest concentration since 2018 after the Covid year of 2020. However, PM10 levels in 2023 were still 3.41 times higher than the annual NAAQS and 13.66 times higher than WHO's annual safe limit.

This December saw three severe days with AQI in the very poor category on most days. November was the worst polluted ever. The penultimate month of 2023 witnessed 17 days when the AQI was 390 or above. The air quality in October was the most polluted in the past three years.

Anumita Roychowdhury, executive director for research

and advocacy at the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), said: "This winter, we have seen higher pollution levels. This is the result of the combination of more adverse meteorological conditions and trapping of high pollution in local and surrounding regions. This is a reminder of the need for more stringent action on key pollution sources."

Sunil Dahiya, an analyst for the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, said: "Due to Covid, industrial and economical activities had slowed down. However, the consumption of fossil fuels increased in 2023 as the industrial and economical activities were back in full swing. The PM2.5 concentration rose

3.4 times higher than the annual NAAQS and 13.7 times higher than WHO's annual safe limit

► December 2023 was the most polluted in the past five years

► In terms of average AQI, 2023 saw the second lowest AQI

► The average AQI from January to July in 2023 was lower than past years due to meteorological factors, including rain

► 2023 was more polluted than 2022, recording an average PM2.5 concentration of 100 micrograms per cubic metre

► PM2.5 concentration in 2023 was 2.5 times higher than the annual NAAQS and 20 times higher than annual WHO safe limit

► PM10 levels in 2023 were the second lowest since 2018, but it was still

more in 2023 than the previous year as significant action to decrease pollution at source levels was not taken."

In terms of average AQI, 2023 saw the second lowest AQI of 204 after 2020 when it was 185, according to the Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and adjoining areas (CAQM). Barring 2020, 2023 witnessed four months (March, April, June and July) with best ever daily average AQI.

Aarti Khosla, director of Climate Trends, said: "In 2024, it will be five years of the National Clean Air Programme having been implemented. Such marginal and short-lived improvements show that we need a science-based, well-planned and comprehensive action plan."

**New Delhi:** In December this year, the mean maximum temperature was 24.1 degrees Celsius, significantly higher than the normal of 22.8 degrees C, while the mean minimum was 8.6 degrees C, a shade higher than the normal (8.4 degrees C). Not since 2017 have both the mean maximum and minimum temperatures been above normal in December.

On the last day of the year, however, the day temperature dipped to the season's lowest of 15.9 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung on Sunday, 4.5 degrees below normal. However, the meteorological department said while the maximum temperature met conditions for a 'cold day' to the declared, the minimum temperature did not. The day's minimum was 11.7 degrees C while for 'cold day' conditions to be met, it has to be below 10 degrees. In the city, SPS Mayur Vihar saw the lowest maximum temperature of 13.3 degrees C.

Officials said cold day conditions are likely at isolated places on Monday with 'yellow' alert in place. December 2023 just 'trace' rainfall on one day and ended with a rain deficit of 100%. Kuldeep Srivastava, scientist and head, Regional Weather Forecasting Centre, IMD, said, "The western disturbances, which impacted the hills, were not strong enough to cause significant snowfall in western Himalayan region. Only light snowfall was recorded in December and the snow melted easily. Whenever there is a good snowfall, the north-westerly winds bring chilly winds to Delhi."

The plains saw two feeble western disturbances in December. "In absence of a strong western disturbance impacting the plains, only drizzles were recorded at isolated places in Delhi. Since there was no

cloudiness, the sun shone brightly on most days leading to a higher day temperature than normal. As winds blew on most days, the minimum temperature also did not witness a sharp dip," said Srivastava.

The average maximum temperature in December was two degrees higher than the normal mark. Safdarjung, the city's base station, recorded day temperature in the range

of 24-25 degrees Celsius on most days and the maximum temperature saw a drop only in the last week of December. The day temperature was below 20 degrees Celsius on two days—December 30 and 31.

Like at Safdarjung, the difference in maximum and minimum temperatures at other stations on Sunday was low. The maximum and minimum temperatures were 16.1 and 11.7 de-

grees Celsius at Palam, 15 and 10.8 degrees Celsius at Lodhi Road and 15 and 12.1 degrees Celsius at Jafarpur, respectively.

"Throughout the day, Delhi saw uplifted fog. As the fog was at surface height of 100-150 metres, it looked like clouds," said Srivastava. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be around 16 and 8 degrees Celsius on Monday.

### NO COLD DAY OR COLD WAVE

Photo: Piyal Bhattacharjee

**Mean maximum temperature in December 2023**  
23.8° Celsius

**Mean minimum temperature in December 2023**  
8.6° Celsius

► This December was warmest in six years

► December 2017 saw higher mean maximum and minimum temperatures

► This December did not witness a single cold day or cold wave

► The month also ended with 100% rain deficit

► Moderate to dense fog likely for the next four days

► Isolated areas may see cold day conditions on January 1

#### What is a cold wave

A cold wave is considered when the minimum temperature is four or more notches below normal or when the minimum temperature is less than 4 degrees Celsius

#### What is a cold day

A cold day is declared when the minimum temperature is below 10 degrees Celsius and the departure of maximum temperature from normal is 4.5 degrees or above

**DECEMBER WEATHER**

■ Maximum ■ Minimum

**Average**  
23.8  
8.6

Date	Max	Min
Dec-1	25.4	13.3
Dec-2	26.2	10
Dec-3	25.4	10
Dec-4	25.4	10
Dec-5	25.4	10
Dec-6	25.4	10
Dec-7	25.4	10
Dec-8	25.4	10
Dec-9	25.4	10
Dec-10	25.4	10
Dec-11	25.4	10
Dec-12	25.4	10
Dec-13	25.4	10
Dec-14	25.4	10
Dec-15	25.4	10
Dec-16	25.4	10
Dec-17	25.4	10
Dec-18	25.4	10
Dec-19	25.4	10
Dec-20	25.4	10
Dec-21	25.4	10
Dec-22	25.4	10
Dec-23	25.4	10
Dec-24	25.4	10
Dec-25	25.4	10
Dec-26	25.4	10
Dec-27	25.4	10
Dec-28	25.4	10
Dec-29	25.4	10
Dec-30	25.4	10
Dec-31	25.4	10

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**CMOH, DHHD RECRUITMENT NOTICE**  
Memo No: DH&FWS/DHHD/2397/2023-24; Dated: 27/12/2023  
Walk-in Interview for various posts under NHM and XV-FC will be conducted on 05.01.2024. For details visit "Recruitment" URL of [www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in)

**CMOH,**  
**Diamond Harbour HD**  
ICA-N 695(2)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**ABRIDGED NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
e-NIT No. WBW/EE/SID/IC-NIT-08/2023-24  
Circulated vide memo No. 559, Dated: 28.12.2023  
Tender is hereby invited by the Executive Engineer, South Dinajpur Irrigation Division, for the work of "Engagement of 49 Nos. Security Personnel and 1 No. Supervisor on purely temporary basis of different categories for guarding, at different Government Stack-yard, Office etc. under the control of the Executive Engineer, Burdwan Division, P.W.D. within the jurisdiction of Burdwan, Burdwan East, Kalna and Katwa Sub-Division, P.W.D. (2nd Call). Earnest Money: Rs. 1,00,000.00, N.I.E. No.: 04 of 2023-24. Tender ID: 2023\_PWD\_633383.1. Bid Submission Start Date (Online): 28.12.2023 from 6:00 PM. Bid Submission Closing Date (Online): 19.01.2024 upto 10:30 A.M. Pre Bid Meeting on 09.01.2024 at 1:00 P.M. Corrigendum, if any will be published in website only. Details of N.I.E. and Tender Documents may be downloaded from [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) or [www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in) or the Office of the Undersigned. Sd/- CMOH, DHHD. ICA-T26846(4)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**PWD TENDER NOTICE**  
Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Directorate, Burdwan Division invites online e-Bid for the work of "Engagement of 49 Nos. Security Personnel and 1 No. Supervisor on purely temporary basis of different categories for guarding, at different Government Stack-yard, Office etc. under the control of the Executive Engineer, Burdwan Division, P.W.D. within the jurisdiction of Burdwan, Burdwan East, Kalna and Katwa Sub-Division, P.W.D. (2nd Call). Earnest Money: Rs. 1,00,000.00, N.I.E. No.: 04 of 2023-24. Tender ID: 2023\_PWD\_633383.1. Bid Submission Start Date (Online): 28.12.2023 from 6:00 PM. Bid Submission Closing Date (Online): 19.01.2024 upto 10:30 A.M. Pre Bid Meeting on 09.01.2024 at 1:00 P.M. Corrigendum, if any will be published in website only. Details of N.I.E. and Tender Documents may be downloaded from [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) or [www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in) or the Office of the Undersigned. Sd/- Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Directorate, Burdwan Division, P.W.D. ICA-T26876(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority**  
Himanchal Vihar, Near-Passport Seva Laghu Kendra, Matigara- 734010  
**NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER**  
The Chief Executive Officer, Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority, Siliguri invites electronic notice inviting e-bid (Online) under 2(Two) bid system from eligible resourceful bidders and experienced firms / companies / individual contractors for the following works: Tender No. NIT 120/Engg/2023-24 of SIDA. Name of Work: Construction of Bituminous Road including both side Drain from Senpara More to New Dhardhara Bridge (Length-1.5KM) under Ward No. 2, Jalpaiguri Municipality. Amount put to Tender: Rs. 1,21,22,399.00, Earnest Money: Rs. 2,42,448.00. Tender Documents Sale/Download Start Date & Time: 01.01.2024 at 4.00 P.M. and Bid Submission End Date & Time: 22.01.2024 upto 4.00 P.M. Date of opening of Technical Proposals - 25.01.24 at 11.00 A.M. Date of opening of Financial Proposals - to be notified after technical evaluation. Corrigendum if any will be published in website only. All details can be obtained from the website [www.sida.org](http://www.sida.org) or Log in <http://www.wbtenders.gov.in> or contact Engineering Section of SIDA at (0353) 2512922, 2515647. Sd/- Chief Executive Officer ICA-T26843(4)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**PWD TENDER NOTICE**  
The Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Kolkata East Division invites e-Tender on Percentage rate basis vide e-Tender No. WBW/EE/KED/NIT-49/2023-24 for 1 (one) no work vide Tender ID: 2023\_WBPWD\_633435.1 of 2023-24. Bid Submission Start Date (online) is 01.01.2024 from 1.30 P.M. Bid Submission closing date (online) is 13.01.2024 upto 1.30 P.M. Corrigendum if any will be published in website only. Details of N.I.T and Tender documents may be downloaded from [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) Sd/- Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Kolkata East Division. ICA-T26877(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**TENDER NOTICE**  
On behalf of the Governor of West Bengal, E-Tenders invited by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, Diamond Harbour Health District, South 24 Parganas, Pin-743331, for supply of "Dental Chair and Other Equipment" from resourceful, eligible agency having experience in Govt. Sections. Technical & Financial Bid Submission Closing Date: vide Ref. No. PHE/MID/ENT/13/2023-24. Details, Please visit the website [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) / [www.wbhealth.gov.in](http://www.wbhealth.gov.in) or the Office of the Undersigned. Sd/- CMOH, DHHD. ICA-T26847(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**EXTENSION OF DATES**  
1st Corrigendum Notice regarding Extension of dates vide eNIT No. 64 (2nd Call for SI. No. 06 & 14) of EE/MID of 2022-2023 vide Tender ID: 2023\_PHEID\_616419.1. The last date for submission of tender is 15.01.2024 upto 18:00 Hours. Sd/- Executive Engineer, Midnapore Division ICA-T26859(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**e-TENDER CANCELLATION NOTICE**  
Ref. No. eNIT No. 26 of EE/JHD of 2023-24. PHED. 626252.1 is cancelled due to technical issues Sd/- for Executive Engineer, Jhargram Division, PHE Dte. ICA-T26866(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**ABRIDGED NOTICE INVITING e-TENDER**  
NIT No. 19 of 2023-24 Circulated vide Memo No. 1879/PO dt. 28.12.2023  
On behalf of the Governor of West Bengal, E-Tenders are invited in V.B.F. No. 2911 by the Executive Engineer, Purulia Division, PHE Dte. (2023\_PHEID\_633955.1 to 40) vide proposal submission end date 25.01.2024 upto 6.00 PM. Other details information / download / upload will be available from the website [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) Sd/- Executive Engineer, Purulia Division, PHE Dte. ICA-T26870(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**e-TENDER NOTICE**  
e-Tender is invited by the Executive Engineer, Midnapore Division, PHE Dte. on behalf of Governor of West Bengal vide Ref. No. PHE/MID/ENT/13/2023-24 and ID: 2023\_PHEID\_634560.1 to 2 for Repair & Renovation of Ground Floor Corridor & Toilet Block of Narampur PHE Office Complex under Midnapore Division, PHE Dte. Details will be available in the website [www.wbtenders.gov.in](http://www.wbtenders.gov.in) In the last date for submission of tender is 17.01.2024 upto 18:00 Hours. Sd/- for Executive Engineer, Midnapore Division, PHE Dte. ICA-T26872(2)/2023

## Ggn sees cleanest Dec air in 5 years, but it's still poor

Ipsita.Pati@timesgroup.com

**Gurgaon:** This December was the cleanest since 2018, though the city's average air quality was still 'poor' and the month did not record any 'good' or 'satisfactory' days.

An analysis of air quality index (AQI) data by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) showed that on average, the 24-hour AQI index was 259 this December. The city's AQI was 'very poor' on five days and 'moderate' on two days. It logged 24 days in the 'poor' category, when the count is between 200 and 300 on the AQI scale.

In December 2022, the average AQI was 276. It was 295 in 2021, 280 in

2020 and 263 in 2019.

The last time December air quality was better was in 2018, when the average was 202. It was also the last time that a 'satisfactory' air day was recorded in the month - on December 19, 2018.

Experts said more days with brisk winds and a delayed onset of winter cold may have improved AQI.

"Meteorological conditions were favourable for pollutants to disperse as day temperatures were warmer. The average wind speed for the month was 10 km/hour, which has not been the case in previous years. Also, we are witnessing a delayed winter," Shubhansh Tiwari, research associate at Centre for Science and Environment (CSE),

said on Sunday. Tiwari pointed out that the only reason that the air was relatively cleaner this December was due to meteorological factors.

"If we need to ensure that air quality improves in the region, we need to focus on yearlong contributors to pollution and local emissions as well because we are still witnessing AQI in 'poor' and 'very poor' categories," he said.

Air quality plummets across Delhi-NCR every year with the onset of winter, cloaking cities in toxic haze as pollutants remain suspended close to the ground. To counter this, the Graded Response Action Plan is enforced, mandating measures such as banning of diesel generator sets, mechanised cleaning of roads, sprin-

kling water, prohibiting construction and shutting down polluting industries.

Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) officials said suspension of road dust due to vehicular traffic and waste burning were key sources of pollutants right now.

"Over the years, highly polluting industries have moved out of NCR. We have changed rules regarding DG sets and also put a ban on biomass burning. These have definitely given some results, but we need to strengthen public transportation system and control construction and demolition waste and road dust," an HSPCB official said.

On Sunday, Gurgaon's AQI improved to 203 from 273 a day before.

## Delhi govt's EV policy to be extended till March

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The Delhi government has decided to extend its electric vehicles (EV) policy for another three months, senior officials of the transport department said. Transport minister Kailash Gahlot too confirmed the same.

The policy will be extended until the end of March 2024 and cabinet approval for the same would be given soon, they said.

According to the EV policy, two-wheelers are eligible for a Rs 5,000 subsidy per kWh of battery capacity; three-wheelers are eligible for a Rs 30,000 subsidy regardless of the overall cost or battery capacity; and the subsidy for four-wheelers — Rs 10,000 per kWh of battery capacity — is available only for the first 1,000 EVs registered under the scheme.

The EV policy, which had expired on August 8, 2023, has been given repeated extensions as a fresh policy has not been readied yet.

The transport department had earlier said that the policy was stuck after termination of the services of advisors, consultants and fellows in the department. Gahlot had said that these people had technical expertise and were working on giving shape to several policies of the transport department, including EV 2.0, and cab and bus aggregators.

Officials said the government has almost finalised the new EV policy, which would be called Delhi EV policy 2.0. However, it is yet to be decided when the policy would come into effect.

They said that during the stakeholder consultation to draft a revised Delhi EV policy, the department had received maximum suggestions to increase incentives for those aspiring to buy EVs, and easier finance options and rebates in the interest rate for people buying EVs.

## 2023 vehicle sales trump pre-Covid numbers

Abhinav.Rajput  
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**New Delhi:** The year 2023 saw a record sale of vehicles in Delhi with over 6.5 lakh registered in the national capital, which is the highest in the last five years.

On average, Delhi saw 1,800 vehicles sold each day that totalled to 6,56,649.

The year also saw the city's vehicle sales beating pre-pandemic registration figures. It was 6.4 lakh in 2019.

The number of vehicles registered this year was about 50,000 more than last year.

Of the total vehicles sold in 2023, two-wheelers (motorcycles and scooters) topped the list at 4 lakh, cars at 1.9 lakh, goods carriers at 19,849 and e-rickshaw at 17,545. Delhi also registered overall 73,447 EVs in 2023.

Agriculture tractors in 2023 were among the least sold vehicles with seven tractors registered till December 31.

Former deputy commissioner of transport department Anil Chhikara said: "One obvious reason is that the pandemic is behind us. Second, the past few years have seen a sharp rise in the number of delivery persons of e-commerce platforms, delivery service platforms and bike taxis especially in a metropolitan city like Delhi." This was also reflected in the break-up, which saw two-wheeler sales rising, he said.

The number of two-wheelers registered in 2023 was 4

**RACING AHEAD**

**Year-wise registrations**

Year	Registrations
2019	6,40,752
2020	4,23,907
2021	4,59,158
2022	6,08,521
2023	6,56,649+

**TILL TODAY**  
**1,44,85,756**

**Month-wise vehicle registrations in 2023**

Month	Registrations
JAN	59,535
FEB	48,785
MAR	54,342
APR	48,032
MAY	48,360
JUN	51,039
JUL	54,106
AUG	52,442
SEP	58,384
OCT	80,714
NOV	47,875
DEC	47,875

**Vehicle type**

Vehicle type	2023	2022
Motorcycle and scooter	4 lakh	3.7 lakh
Car	1.9 lakh	1.7 lakh
E-rickshaw	17,545	13,611
Goods carrier	19,849	25,782
Bus	1,923	1,147
Cabs	6,135	5,12
Agricultural tractor	7	1

lakh. The year before it was 3.6 lakh, according to figures on government's Vahan portal.


Chhikara said that due to the "end of the life" rule—ten years for diesel and fifteen years for petrol—also new vehicles were purchased. "The NOC being sought for by other states has increased ten times in the last decade," he said.

PK Sarkar, former head of transport planning in the School of Planning Architecture, said: "One of the primary reasons (for increasing sales) would be the problems of inadequate public transport, coupled with lack of last-mile connectivity."


"Now it is extremely difficult to ride the metro during peak hours. On the other hand, the easy availability of loans from banks has helped."

"Also, Delhi is a city with wide roads, flyovers and the infrastructure designed to suit private vehicles. Had it been any other metro city in India, users would explore the option of whether using their own car would be comfortable due to lack of road space," he said.






**Yogi Adityanath**  
Chief Minister, U.P.



**Nand Gopal Gupta 'Nandi'**  
Minister of Industrial Development, U.P.

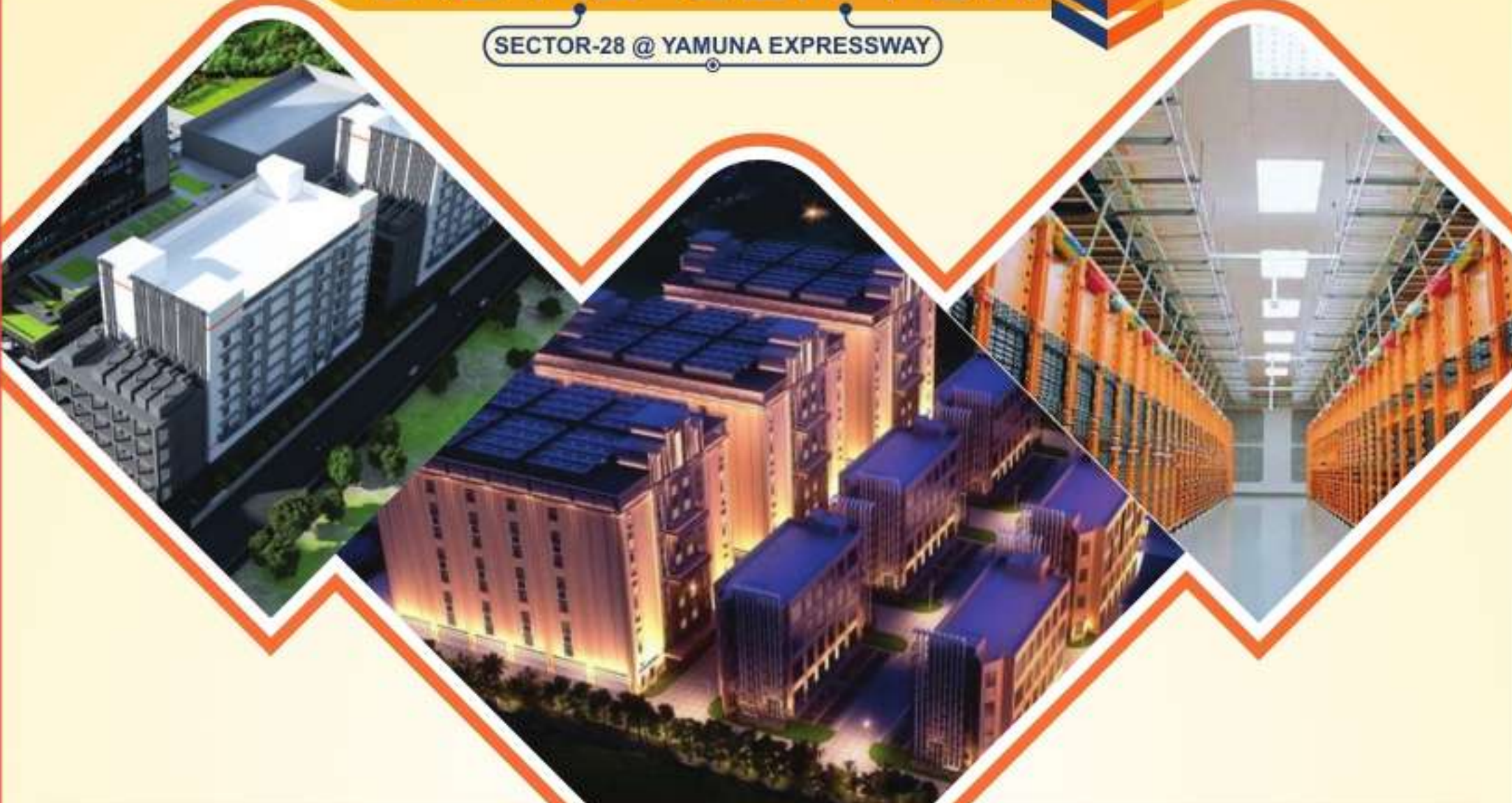


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2	20095	D-2	28	14076.00	5%	14779.80	297000081	29700008
3	20065	D-3	28	14079.78	5%	14783.77	296636345	29663635
4	21383	D-12	28	13923.85	10%	15316.24	327507160	32750716
5	22350	D-13	28	13821.14	5%	14512.20	324347670	32434767


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Date of Closing


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**Yogi Adityanath**  
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## HAPPY & HAZY NEW YEAR



Photos: Piyal Bhattacharjee, Rajesh Mehta

# How This Gang Left Its Stamp Behind: Designed, Printed & Sold Fake Papers

### Cops Arrest 13 Suspects In Raids Across Six States In Operation That Lasted Six Months

Rajshankar Jha  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: This could be Delhi's own 'mini-Telgi scam'. Delhi Police is learnt to have busted a massive racket involving designing, printing and supplying of fake stamp papers in a clandestine operation, which lasted six months and led to the arrest of 13 people in raids across six states. Fake stamps worth crores of rupees were recovered, sources said.

The cops not only caught the sellers who dealt with customers, but also the masterminds and dismantled their facility. They recovered metal plates, high-end computers, machines, software and printers, sources added.

A probe was initiated after a lawyer filed an FIR in May this year alleging that he had been duped. The government printing facility in Nashik confirmed that the stamps sold to him were not genuine.

"During the course of the investigation, an accused named Pradeep Kumar, who sold the counterfeit share transfer stamps to the complainant, was arrested on May 23 and 2,700 counterfeit share transfer stamps were recovered from his possession," said an official.

During questioning, the accused disclosed that these stamps were sold to him by a man named Akbar and his brother, Asgar. Thereafter, cops conducted raids and arrested the siblings. More counterfeit share transfer stamps were recovered from them.

Thereafter, some other accused were arrested in the case who used to sell these forged stamps to people. The

#### Who was Abdul Karim Telgi

A convicted mastermind behind India's infamous counterfeiting scandal who built an empire worth ₹30,000 crore before being sentenced to 30 years in prison in 2006



#### DELHI'S OWN MINI TELGI SCAM

##### How it unfolded

March 2023 | Businessman Pradeep Sehrawat buys 100 stamps for ₹14,000 for a share transfer deed

> Quality of stamp looks inferior, Sehrawat files a complaint  
> Stamps sent to India Security Press at Nashik for verification

April | The analysis report submitted by the Nashik Authority confirmed that the stamps were forged

May | Delhi Police files FIR after receiving a complaint from the victim

##### THE INVESTIGATION

> Probe reveals stamp papers were delivered at victim's home by another man named Pradeep

First arrest | May 23 | Cops trace Pradeep using his mobile location, arrest him; 2,700 counterfeit stamps seized  
> Pradeep leads the cops to his associates Akbar and Asgar; more stamps seized  
> More sellers arrested, sent to jail

#### Catching The Big Fish

June 20 | Collective interrogation of sellers reveals two names—Rakesh Kumar Jaiswal and Ranjeet Kumar—as suppliers; they were arrested too

In all, 13 people arrested in subsequent months in clandestine raids

##### BUSTING THE PRINTING FACILITY

Recoveries  
Machine used to print the counterfeit stamps

Printers  
Computer  
Metal plates  
Fake stamps worth crores

##### MODUS OPERANDI

> Gang promised home delivery of stamps to buyers, advertised on Google

> Went underground, switched off phones after collecting money and giving fake stamps

> Probe revealed that the syndicate was designing and printing stamp papers, postal stamps and share transfer stamps at a clandestine facility

> The printed stamps were sold across the country through distributors

> Analysis of recent bank transactions led the cops to receipt of over ₹2.2cr from buyers

their "distributors", who would then sell it to end users across cities.

The total value of counterfeit share transfer stamps, stamp papers and postal stamps initially stood at over Rs 2.24 crore. Overall, 13 people were arrested in the case, and a chargesheet detailing their modus operandi was filed against them in a Delhi court, said an official.

The accused, cops found, were fond of a lavish life and took to crime to make quick money. They often visited night clubs and splurged on booze and luxuries reminiscent of their supposed ideology, who had spent Rs93 lakh in a dance bar in one night.

In Delhi, it's not very often that the city police bust fake stamp paper printing racket and dismantle a printing facility of this scale. In 2003, Delhi Police had recovered fake stamp papers worth Rs 1.5 crore and arrested a couple in north Delhi. The fake stamp papers were being prepared at an east Delhi facility. In 2012, a former Delhi police inspector was convicted in a case related to the Telgi scam.

Seven years ago, the police had arrested a man for selling fake stamp papers worth Rs 1.5 lakh to a businessman at Patiala House courts. The accused, identified as Farhan (24), had assisted his father, who was an unauthorised stamp paper vendor, at the courts. The accused would print digital stamp papers worth Rs 10 and then scratch off the part where Rs 10 was written. He would then use the same font to write Rs 500 on the scratched part, and sell the stamp paper at a profit, officials had said.

# Lawyer who smelled a rat prompted op by police

Rajshankar Jha@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The operation that resulted in the busting of the multi-crore stamp paper racket was carried out in the aftermath of a complaint from a lawyer who fell for the gang, which lured people on pretext of home delivery of stamps. The gang even claimed to be affiliated to the government that was encouraging doorstep delivery of services, sources said.

In his complaint to the police, the victim said he dealt in company matters and was in need of share transfer stamps. His search on the internet

led him to a portal that carried an ad for sale of "all kinds of stamps" and a phone number for "home delivery".

"I contacted the given number and a man named Pradeep, who claimed to be a share market expert, answered. He told me that he will send his delivery boy at my office along with the share transfer stamps as per requirement. He was also in touch with me through WhatsApp calls. I ordered share transfer stamps worth Rs 14,000," the FIR accessed by TOI stated.

Later, the victim checked the stamps and found the quality of print and the paper different from the ones he had used in the past. When Shera-

wat called on the given number, the call was disconnected. The gang was also using SIM cards issued on fake documents and destroyed them periodically, probe revealed.

Suspicious that he may have been duped, Sehrawat then got the stamps checked by some company secretaries, who said they didn't look genuine though the stamps resembled the ones printed by the government. Alarmed, Sehrawat filed a complaint with the police. The complainant was sold 140 share transfer stamps, each worth Rs 100, which he later handed over to the police.

"During investigation, the stamps were sent to India Security

Press, Nashik, Maharashtra. The analysis report confirmed that the stamps were forged after which an FIR was filed by Delhi Police and investigation initiated," said a police officer privy to the developments.

The police is learnt to have invoked sections 258 and 259 of the IPC, which define the punishment for a person who possesses, sells, or offers for sale, any stamp which he knows, or has reason to believe, to be counterfeit of any stamp issued by government for the purpose of revenue. This has a provision of imprisonment of a term which may extend to seven years, besides fine. The cops have also slapped Section

420 (cheating) of the IPC in the FIR.

According to officials, the stamps are printed in government press and cannot be printed or published by any entity other than this press. "In this case, the resemblance showed that the stamps were printed with computers and technology of high quality, but the quality of paper used showed that it was not printed from a government printing press," said an official.

"The fact that these counterfeit stamps were being published parallel to the government's printing press made it a crime against state also as it caused a huge loss to the government exchequer, the official added.

## Teen run over by speeding bus near Manesar

Gurgaon: An 18-year-old trying to alert commuters about an overturned pick-up truck on the Delhi-Jaipur highway died after a speeding bus ran him over near Manesar in the early hours of Sunday.

According to the complaint, Govind Kumar of UP was travelling in the pick-up truck when its driver Anurag Kumar swerved to avoid a collision with a car being driven on the wrong side of the carriageway around 5.30am.

The truck lost balance and overturned, Govind's brother Satish said in the complaint.

"Both of them were fine and they got out of the truck to check the damage. Then they were on the road, signalling other approaching vehicles to avoid hitting the truck. It was at that moment that a speeding bus from Jaipur hit Govind," Satish, who works at a private company in Rajasthan's Bhiwadi, told cops.

The bus driver did not stop and sped away, he said. Police said an FIR was registered at the Manesar station.

# A ray of hope for terminally ill cancer patients

Anuja Jaiswal  
@timesgroup.com

## LONGEVITY BOOSTER

THERANOSTICS INCREASES LONGEVITY OF TERMINALLY ILL CANCER PATIENTS BY 2 YEARS

### What is theranostics

A combination of therapeutics and diagnostics, it uses one radioactive drug to identify or diagnose the ailment and another to deliver therapy to treat the main tumour or any metastatic tumours



### Where it can be helpful

- > Castration-resistant prostate cancer
- > Radioiodine-refractory thyroid cancer
- > Neuroendocrine tumours
- > Triple-negative breast cancer

### No. of patients who've received treatment

- 12,000 for thyroid cancer
- > Over 300 for prostate cancer
- > At least 600 for neuroendocrine tumour
- > Over 40 for triple negative breast cancer
- > At least 27 for medullary thyroid cancer

tion (unlike external beam radiotherapy) and the selectivity of chemotherapy.

"Traditional methods such as surgery, radiation and chemotherapy are the

primary pillars of treating cancer. In cases where the disease has spread to distant organs, drugs become the sole viable option. While external beam radiation and surgery

are effective at a loco-regional level, they face limitations in treating extensive distant spreads," he said.

Professor Bal said this therapy has shown positive results among patients suffering from castration-resistant prostate cancer that continues to grow even when the testosterone levels are at or below the castrate level, radioiodine-refractory thyroid cancer, neuroendocrine tumours, triple-negative breast cancer and medullary thyroid cancer.

He further said that this approach aims to assess and treat using the same or similar biomolecules, enabling selective receptor-based dose delivery. This results in sparing surrounding healthy tissues, a notable advantage over external beam radiotherapy where excessive toxicity to healthy tissue is a limiting factor. Internal radiation using radiopharmaceuticals can utilise beta-radiation or modern alpha-radiation, and even tandem therapies employing both beta and alpha radiopharmaceuticals.

However, significant chal-

lenges persist, particularly regarding the non-availability of high specific activity Lutetium-177 and alpha-emitting radionuclides from Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), necessitating costly imports from Germany. "A single dose of alpha-emitting radionuclides costs over Rs 5 lakh and a patient has to buy it due to non-availability of the drug in India," he said, adding that more research was needed to discover an indigenous substitute.

Professor Bal said the evolving paradigm in cancer therapy now emphasises on targeting the cancer micro-environment, rather than solely focusing on cancer cells. A significant portion of the cancer mass comprises supporting cells known as cancer-associated fibroblasts, which produce fibroblast activation proteins crucial for tumour growth, neoangiogenesis and improved nutrition to cancer cells. This shift opens up opportunities for imaging and therapeutic interventions targeting CAFs, paving the way for innovative cancer treatments.

## YOUR TOP TEN TOPICALS OF 2023!

### Moon meetha karo!

1



### Just cooking like a Wow!

2



3



4



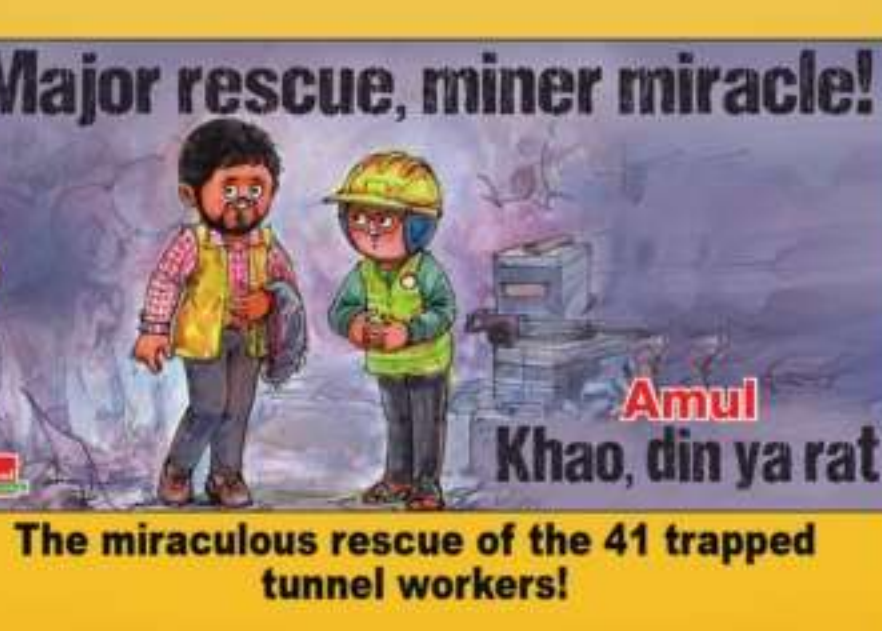
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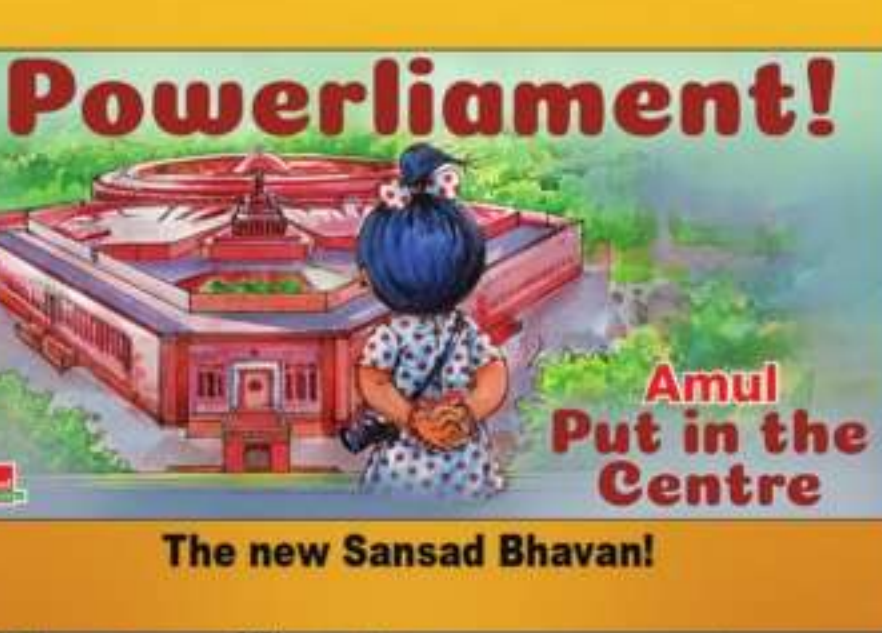
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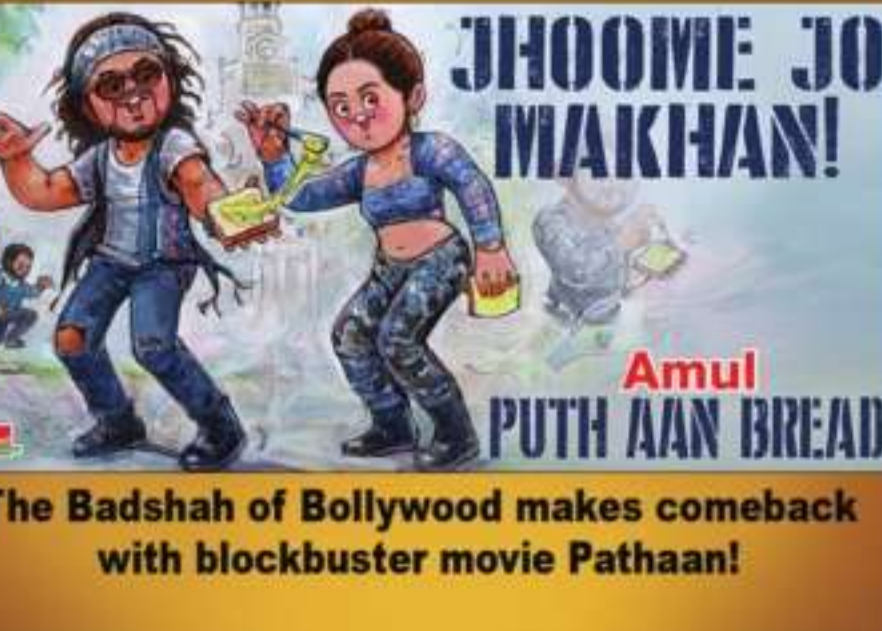
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8



9



10



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# Uttarakhand: Investors' Paradise



From time to time, many great men in India have done the work of enhancing the beauty of the crown of Mother India and showing the right direction to the society. There are many such personalities about whom we have only heard and have not seen them directly, but when we look at the Prime Minister today, we see a part of all those great personalities in him. The hard work with which the country's PM is trying to make India a world leader again, also plants the seeds of hope and faith among 140 crore Indians.

- Pushkar Singh Dhami,  
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

PICS: DIPR, GOVT OF UTTARAKHAND



Prime Minister Narendra Modi launching Uttarakhand government brand 'House of Himalayas' at the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023

becoming a ground reality. He praised the state government and all those involved in the successful rescue mission of workers from the tunnel at Silkyara.

Referring his close relationship with Uttarakhand, the PM said that Uttarakhand is a state where divinity and development are felt together. The Prime Minister recited one of his poems to

further elaborate this sentiment.

Referring to the investors present at the occasion as industry veterans, the Prime Minister drew an analogy of SWOT analysis done by multinational companies and stressed upon the nation to undertake this exercise. He highlighted that the results of the SWOT analysis will indicate abundance of aspirations, hope, confidence,

innovation and opportunities in the country. He

also noted indicators of policy-driven governance and citizens' resolve for political stability. Highlighting the recently concluded assembly elections, the Prime Minister said, "Aspirational India wants a stable government rather than instability" and underlined that people voted based on good governance and its track record.

He highlighted the country's ability to grow at a record pace despite the Covid-19 pandemic and unstable geopolitical landscape. The Prime Minister remarked, "Be it the Corona vaccine or economic policies, India was confident in its capabilities and policies." As a result, India stands ahead compared to other large economies of the world. He said that every state of India including

PM NARENDRA MODI INAUGURATED THE UTTARAKHAND GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT 2023 AND CALLED UPON THE INVESTOR COMMUNITY TO LEVERAGE THE INHERENT STRENGTHS OF UTTARAKHAND FOR A MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL GROWTH MODEL

## Uttarakhand: A thriving hub for investors

Uttarakhand is taking advantage of this power.

### THE DOUBLE ENGINE IMPACT

The Prime Minister reiterated the benefits of a 'double engine' government whose dual efforts are visible everywhere. While the state government is working keeping in mind the local realities, the Government of India is making unprecedented investments in Uttarakhand. Both levels of the government are enhancing each other's efforts. Referring to the work to reach Chardham from rural areas, the Prime Minister said that the day is not far when the distance between Delhi-Dehradun will be reduced to two and a half hours. The expansion of Dehradun and Pantnagar airports will strengthen air connectivity. Heli-taxi services are being expanded in the state and rail connectivity is being strengthened. All this is creating new opportunities for agriculture, industry, logistics, warehousing, tourism and hospitality.

Contrary to the approach of previous governments that provided limited access to places located in border areas, the Prime Minister underlined the double engine government's efforts to develop them as the country's first villages. He mentioned the Aspirational Block Programme where emphasis is being given to those villages and areas, which are lagging in development standards. The PM also highlighted the untapped potential of Uttarakhand and urged investors to take maximum advantage of it.

PM inaugurated 'Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit 2023

Uttarakhand is a state where one can experience divinity and development together

Aspirational India wants stable government instead of instability

Government of Uttarakhand and Government of India are enhancing each other's efforts

Start 'Wed in India' movement on the lines of 'Make in India'

'House of Himalayas' further strengthens the concept of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local for Global'

MoUs worth more than Rs 40,000 crore signed in the presence of the CM at Destination Uttarakhand Energy Conclave

Highlighting the tourism sector of Uttarakhand, which has benefited from the 'double engine' government, the Prime Minister also

The Prime Minister has brought forward new hope for the development of Uttarakhand by inaugurating the House of Himalayas. Also, the products being prepared by self-help groups have got a global level platform. The Prime Minister talked about wedding in Uttarakhand, and his statement has created an atmosphere of enthusiasm among the people of the state. 30 new policies have been made in the state in the last 06 months. Investors' enthusiasm towards Uttarakhand is continuously increasing. A land bank of 6000 acres of government land has been prepared by the state government.

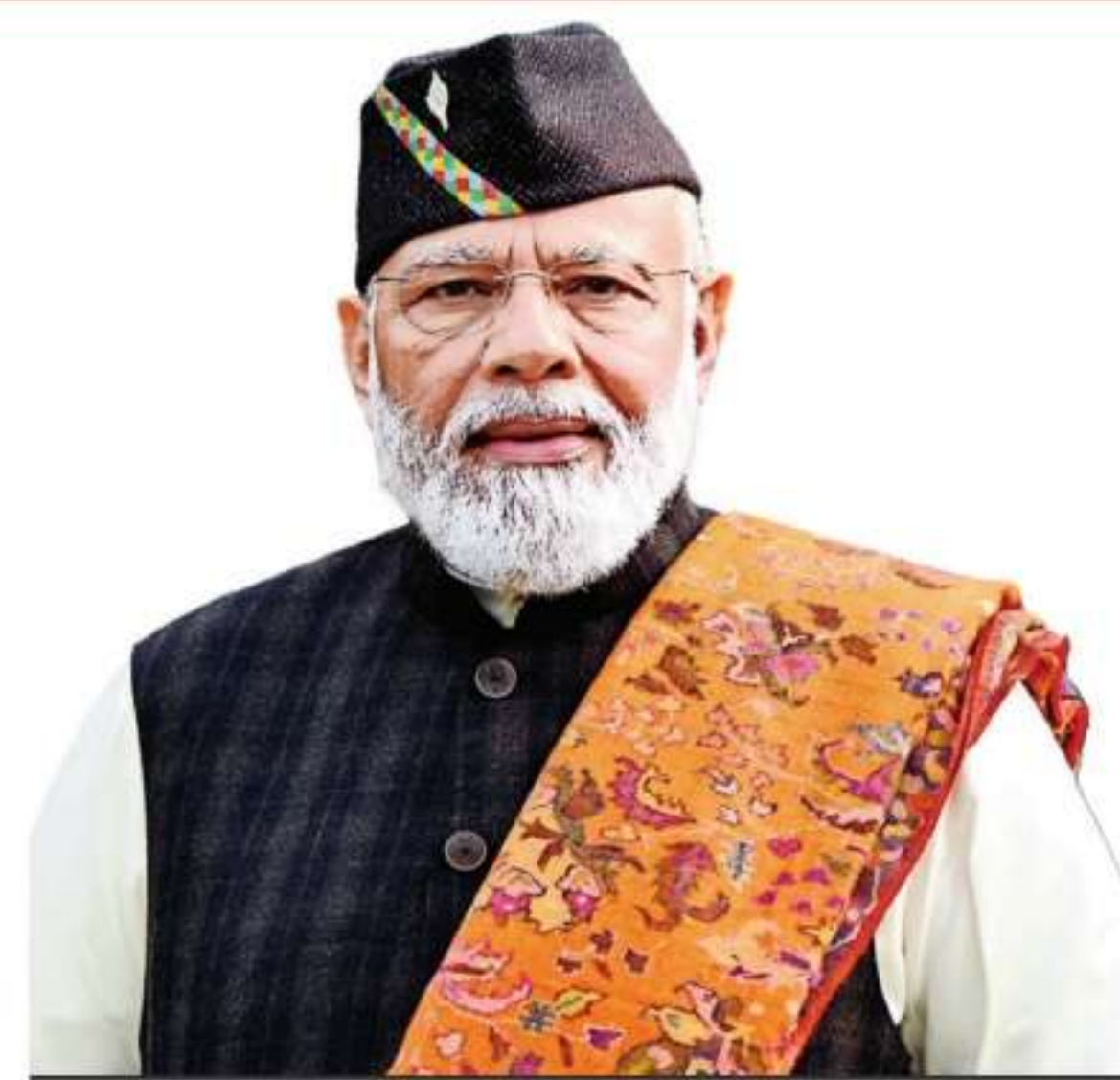
- Dr SS Sandhu (IAS)  
Chief Secretary, Govt of Uttarakhand

noted the enthusiasm of people from across the country as well as the world to visit India. He informed about creating a theme-based tourism circuit with the aim of introducing the tourists to nature as well as the heritage of India. The Prime Minister underlined that Uttarakhand is going to emerge as a brand

encompassing nature, culture and heritage. He urged investors to give priority to exploring and creating opportunities in Yoga, Ayurveda, pilgrimage and adventure sports sectors. The PM appealed to the rich, prosperous people and youth of the country to start 'Wed in India' movement on the lines of 'Make in India'. He requested them to organise at least one marriage ceremony in Uttarakhand in the next five years. Highlighting India's ability to achieve any resolution, the Prime Minister said, "Even if 5,000 marriages take place in a year in Uttarakhand, a new infrastructure will be created and the state will be transformed into a wedding destination for the world."

The Prime Minister said that a strong wind of change is blowing in India. An aspirational India has been built in the last 10 years. A large section of the deprived population is being connected to schemes and opportunities. Crores of people who have come out of poverty are giving new impetus to the economy. Both the neo-middle class and the middle class are spending more. "We have to understand the potential of India's middle class. This strength of society in Uttarakhand is also creating a big market for you," the PM said.

The Prime Minister congratulated the Uttarakhand government for launching the 'House of Himalayas' brand and called it an innovative effort to take local products of Uttarakhand to foreign markets. He said, "House of Himalayas further strengthens our concept of 'Vocal for Local' and 'Local for Global'."



The construction of a developed India for the 21st century rests primarily on two pillars, first, pride in our heritage, and second, every possible effort that is being made towards development. Today, both these pillars are being strengthened by the state of Uttarakhand. This decade will surely be the decade of Uttarakhand."

- Narendera Modi,  
Prime Minister

## INVEST IN UTTARAKHAND

To attract more investment in Uttarakhand, Nivesh Mitras have been appointed in various sectors to serve as a 'single point of contact' for entrepreneurs with investments exceeding Rs 5 crore. Currently, there's a rapid expansion of transportation infrastructure in Uttarakhand, with the development of new airports, expansion of railway lines, construction of dedicated freight corridors, heliports, and ropeways, establishing the state's identity in connectivity. The day is approaching when the travel time between Delhi and Dehradun will be reduced to two and a half hours. Expanding Dehradun and Pantnagar airports will enhance air connectivity, while heli-taxi services and strengthened rail connectivity open up new opportunities in agriculture, industry, logistics, warehousing, tourism, and hospitality. Plans include creating theme-based tourist circuits to showcase both nature and India's heritage. Uttarakhand is evolving as a brand that encompasses nature, culture, and heritage. Investors can explore new opportunities in areas like Yoga, Ayurveda, pilgrimage, and adventure sports, making it an attractive destination for various industries.

## HIGHLIGHTS: UTTARAKHAND GLOBAL INVESTORS SUMMIT

More than 12 focus sectors and 4 participating countries. More than 200 investment friendly projects. 13 district level events. Ready investment-friendly project cost over Rs 75,000 crore. 16 sessions. Landbank of over 6000 acres available.

### FOCUS SECTORS

AUTOMOBILE	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
HERBAL AND AROMATICS	AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURE-RELATED SECTORS
BIOTECHNOLOGY	MEDICINE
AYUSH AND WELLNESS	FOOD PROCESSING
FILM SHOOTING	HORTICULTURE AND FLORICULTURE
RENEWABLE ENERGY	EDUCATION
TOURISM	ELECTRONICS

## MAJOR POLICIES OF UTTARAKHAND

The Uttarakhand government has implemented several key policies to boost various sectors:

**Service Sector Policy 2023 | Tire Energy Policy 2023 | MSME Policy 2023 | Start-up Policy 2023 | Customised Package | Logistics Policy 2023 | Film Policy 2015 (revised in 2019) | Private Industrial Park Policy 2023 | Macro Industrial Policy 2015 | Export Policy 2021 | Tourism Policy 2023-30 | Drone Policy 2023 | Information Technology Policy 2019 | AYUSH and Wellness Policy | Biotechnology Policy 2018-23 | Food Processing Policy | Pumped Storage Project Policy 2023**

These policies collectively contribute to the overall economic and industrial growth of Uttarakhand.

## A FAVOURED INVESTMENT DESTINATION

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, Uttarakhand is making significant progress, thanks to the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The young Chief Minister is wholeheartedly dedicated to the comprehensive development of Uttarakhand and is actively taking steps to attract major investors from other states. The state government, under Dhami's leadership, is consistently working to improve the industrial environment for everyone.



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami @Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit (GIS)

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

## Welcome to the abode of prosperity

CM Puskar Singh Dhami elaborated the strengths of Uttarakhand that are most conducive for the investor community, at the summit



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with Governor of Uttarakhand Lt Gen Gurmit Singh & CM of Uttarakhand, Pushkar Singh Dhami, at the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit

CM Pushkar Singh Dhami said that the Prime Minister had started organising the Investors Summit under the name "Vibrant Gujarat" when he was the CM of Gujarat. Inspired by that, the state government organised the Investors Summit on the theme of "Destination Uttarakhand". He remarked, "It will be our endeavour to organise this summit every two years. The main objective of "Destination Uttarakhand" is the overall development of the state by coordinating ecology and economy with green economy and employment." The target was to receive investment proposals worth Rs 2.5 lakh crore in the Global Investors Summit, and so far agreements have been made on investment proposals exceeding the target. Out of these, the work of implementing investment proposals worth Rs 44 thousand crore has been started so far, which will increase the employment opportunities of the local people rapidly in the state. He said that an investor needs good business environment, good law and

order, investment-friendly policies and better connectivity as well as better health and climate, and Uttarakhand has all this. He said that a grand Convention Centre will soon be constructed in Uttarakhand like the Mahatma Mandir Convention and Exhibition Centre of Gujarat. The Chief Minister said that Devbhoomi Uttarakhand welcomes crores of pilgrims and tourists every year. The state with a population of about 1.25 crore efficiently manages about seven crore people every year, which is a symbol of the high-quality law and order system of the state. "Nivesh Mitra" has been appointed in various sectors in the state, who will be the 'single point of contact' for entrepreneurs investing more than Rs 5 crore. While on one hand, the transport routes have expanded in Uttarakhand, on the other hand, Uttarakhand is creating its own identity in the field of connectivity through the development of new airports and construction of ropeways and heliports.



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami presenting product of Uttarakhand government 'House of Himalayas' to PM Narendra Modi at the summit



Panel discussions

Amit Shah, Union Home and Cooperation Minister, while paying tribute to Devbhoomi Uttarakhand on the closing ceremony of Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit said that this is not only the celebration of Destination Uttarakhand, but also the beginning of many new things. He said that against the target of agreements worth Rs 2 lakh crore, agreements worth more than Rs 3.5 lakh crore have been signed in the state in the Global Investors Summit, for this he congratulated the government and administration of Uttarakhand under the leadership of

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami. This is the beginning of exploring the infinite possibilities of the new Uttarakhand. This will become a strong example in front of the entire world as to how Uttarakhand can relate to the industry in an eco-friendly manner. He said that the Prime Minister said with confidence that this decade will be the decade of Uttarakhand. This is a place where development and divine power are together. Chief Minister Dhami has also linked performance with this.

CM Pushkar Singh Dhami, while welcoming

## A new growth story

CM Pushkar Singh Dhami welcomed Amit Shah, Union Home and Cooperation Minister, on his arrival to Devbhoomi Uttarakhand for the concluding session of the summit

the Union Home Minister on behalf of the people of Devbhoomi Uttarakhand, said that under his

The state of Uttarakhand was created by Atal ji and Modi ji has improved it. The state is progressing rapidly under his leadership. The objective of making Uttarakhand a separate state was that the state should develop rapidly. The state has made remarkable progress under the leadership of CM Pushkar Singh Dhami. Many important initiatives have been taken.

- Amit Shah  
Union Home & Cooperation Minister



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami presenting product of Uttarakhand government, 'House of Himalayas' to Amit Shah, Union Home Minister at the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit (GIS)

leadership, along with strengthening internal security, India will also move towards the goal of "prosperity through cooperation" in the cooperative sector, is growing rapidly, under which all the PACS in the country are being computerised. The work of computerisation of PACS was started

from Uttarakhand for the first time in the country by the Union Cooperative Minister in October 2021 and today all the committees in the state have been computerised. "Destination Uttarakhand" was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi. Amit Shah was present in his closing ceremony. The CM stated that the state government received continuous support from the Prime Minister and the Home Minister in safely evacuating 41 labourers trapped in the Silkyara Tunnel



of Uttarakshi, due to which the Silkyara Mission was successful. For this he also expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister. Amit Shah congratulated the CM and the Uttarakhand Government for the success of the

## On the path of progress

The Uttarakhand government signed MoUs worth Rs 40 thousand 423 crore in the Investors Summit

Under the Destination Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit, MoUs worth Rs 40,423 crore were signed in the presence of CM Pushkar Singh Dhami in the Uttarakhand Energy Conclave organised at the Secretariat. The Chief Minister said that there are immense

possibilities for work in the energy sector in Uttarakhand. The energy sector has an important contribution in the concept and development of Uttarakhand. He said that continuous efforts are being made by the state government to increase investment in the state. Based on the suggestions



PM Narendra Modi at the Uttarakhand Investors Summit 2023



PM Narendra Modi addressing the attendees at the Investors Summit

of people associated with the industrial world, 27 new policies have been made and many policies have been simplified.

Rachna Raturi, additional chief secretary, said that there is a lot of potential to work in the energy sector in the state, and for this all three corporations must work in unity. Increasing investment in the state will increase employment opportunities for the local people.

Dr R Meenakshi Sundaram, secretary, Energy, said that continuous efforts are being made towards making Uttarakhand an energy self-reliant state. Hydropower Policy has been implemented in Uttarakhand with the aim of encouraging investment and employment through hydropower projects.

Ranjana Rajguru, additional secretary, Energy, said that a solar energy policy has been made with the aim of developing green energy and reducing carbon emissions in the state, in which a target of 2500 MW solar projects has been set by 2027. The policy provides for exemption in land use change fees, benefits of MSME policies, provision for deemed purchase of excess production during off-peak hours, introduction of green tariff and other facilities.



PM Narendra Modi at the summit



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami with PM Narendra Modi



PM Narendra Modi interacting with women entrepreneurs at the summit



# NHAI invites bids for improvement of Delhi-Ghaziabad road not under it

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Can the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) invite bids for a road project that's not with it? The question has arisen after the NHAI floated a tender for one-time improvement of 14.4 km stretch of old GT Road from Lal Kuan in Ghaziabad (junction of Delhi-Meerut Expressway) to Gyan Border (Delhi/UP Border). The stretch has not yet been entrusted to the highways authority and it has already spent funds in preparation of a detailed project report (DPR) for the work.

NHAI officials admitted that the stretch has not been entrusted to it. "No entrust-

**The NHAI floated a tender for one-time improvement of 14.4 km stretch of old GT Road from Lal Kuan to Gyan Border**

ment as of now... Bids will be received and opened only after necessary entrustment," a senior official said. Though officials claimed that earlier the stretch was a national highway (NH) and called GT Road, the entire bid document nowhere mentions this corridor as an "NH" or has any NH number. As per the tender document, the NHAI will spend around Rs 371 crore for improvement of the ro-

ad and the successful contractor will maintain the stretch for five years.

Sources said while improvement of this stretch is necessary considering heavy traffic flow and congestion, the NHAI can't spend any government fund on it unless it's tasked to take up the work and the stretch is notified as an NH by the Centre.

Barely two months back, the road transport ministry had written to the NHAI flagging how the agency had been bypassing norms and had taken up works and bid out widening of road stretches even before these are entrusted to it and notified. It has asked the NHAI to submit the list of all stretches

where work had been awarded.

In a letter to the NHAI, the ministry had written, "Henceforth civil work agreement should be signed after declaration of the section as NHs and its entrustment to NHAI. The NHAI should take up the start of any new work only when it is part of any approved scheme or entrusted. Any new work should be initiated only after the formal concurrence of the ministry is obtained."

Officials told TOI that the norms must be followed considering that the budget has been allocated to the NHAI for certain specific works and the annual budget of some departments is less than the cost of this project.

# MCD, Traders To Move SC As De-Sealing Hangs Fire

Corpn To Contest Order To Reopen Shops, Traders Say SC Ruling Flouted

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a fresh twist, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi plans to move the Supreme Court, challenging the judicial committee's directions to reopen shops that were sealed since 2017 on the directions of the monitoring committee.

Interestingly, traders, too, plan to move the Supreme Court against the MCD commissioner for alleged contempt of court, as, according to them, no sealed shop has been reopened since the order of the judicial committee earlier this month.

"After six years of struggle, we thought that this year would end our misery, but it looks like it hasn't. We are left with no choice but to file a contempt petition. It is frustrating to witness MCD's blatant non-compliance with the unambiguous orders of the



UNDER LOCK AND KEY

JC appointed by the Supreme Court," said Vishal Ohri, general secretary, Local Shopping Complex (LSC) Federation of Delhi.

Earlier this month, giving relief to hundreds of property owners, the Supreme Court constituted judicial committee had directed the de-sealing of the first and the second floors of shops sealed in 2017-18 in prominent LSCs of Delhi.

According to MCD officials, however, the corporation has sought a clarification on the directions of opening of the sealed shops without paying conversion charges.

"MCD has moved SC in the matter regarding conversion charges from the shops

that were sealed earlier," an official said.

The sealing, which started from Defence Colony market in December 2017, took place on the directions of the monitoring committee for alleged violation of building bylaws.

The SC constituted the judicial committee last year to deal with the orders passed by the monitoring committee, which had been questioned by traders. The members are Justice (ret'd) Pradeep Nandraj and Justice (ret'd) G S Sistani.

"We have informed the MCD commissioner about the JC order. It has been two weeks and not one shop has been de-sealed. As we are left with no choice, we have to file a contempt petition against the commissioner," said Manish Gupta, president, traders' association of GK-1 N Block Market.

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Mummy, Miss You

## Brother-sister duo arrested after doc alleges sextortion

Avishek.Kumar@timesgroup.com

Ghaziabad: A brother-sister duo were arrested for sextortion after a doctor alleged they had taken Rs 11.5 lakh from him over the past five years and was blackmailing him for more with morphed images.

Police said the accused were residents of Kotwali. The woman, according to the FIR, met the doctor at a government hospital in 2018 and asked for his number in case of emergency.

Over the next few months, the two exchanged messages on WhatsApp about her health con-

dition. One day, she made a video call to the doctor and took a screenshot as they were speaking. The accused then allegedly morphed the image to show the doctor engaging in a sexual act with her — a modus operandi used to target thousands of people every day across the country.

The blackmail followed. The woman allegedly threatened to circulate the morphed images on social media if the doctor did not pay up.

"Initially, she asked for Rs 4.5 lakh to destroy the images. I met the woman and her sister and paid the amount. Not only did she

destroy a pen drive containing the screenshots, but also signed a stamp paper saying she would never meet me in the future," the victim said in his police complaint.

"The woman had saved a copy of the images in her laptop as well. She asked me to meet her again, but I refused. So, she sent some of the morphed images to my wife. She threatened to send these images to my friends as well," the doctor alleged.



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Mentoring us since 4th June, 1944  
Quietly remembered by all your daughters and loving family,  
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**Mr. Churchit & Kanika Agrawal**



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Ashok Malik & Chanaka Kumarasinghe (Sons)  
Ila, Shiv, Gayatri & Ava (Grandchildren)



IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Lt. Shri Kanhaiya Lal Malhotra Ji & Lt. Smt Lakshmi Devi Malhotra Ji on their 120<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary  
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Kanwal Nain Malhotra (Son)  
Usha & Jagdish Chander Malhotra (Daughter in Law & Son)  
All Grand Children & Great Grand Children  
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(02.02.1960 - 01.01.2011)  
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Fondly remembered by:  
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Thakur Family  
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Director of Edu (UP) & VC, Bundelkhand Univ.  
Your love and warmth touched the lives of many and guides us even today.  
- Ravi, Shashi, Chandra Kant, Rajeev & families.

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You are the pillar of strength making us stand tall with your love and blessings. Your presence is felt by all of us every moment. You will forever remain alive in our hearts and memories. **MAY YOUR SOUL REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.** Fondly remembered by wife, sons, daughters-in-law, grandchildren, relatives & friends

**In Loving Memory of SH. MADAN LAL JAIN**  
A man of dignity, a man of wisdom, a man of kindness, a man of humanity indeed. It's been 36 years since you left for heavenly abode, but I still endeavor to live by your teaching. "By elevating the lives of others, your life reaches its highest dimensions." Dinesh Jain, Samta Times, 6A, Industrial Area, Tilak Nagar, New Delhi-110029, "Parshvsthal" Digambar Jain Mandir, Dinesh Jain Complex, 34/3, Delhi Jaipur Road, Gurugram Ph: 9810061124 Email: dinesh-jain@live.in

**And come he slow or come he fast, It is but Death, who comes at last.** - Sir Walter Scott

## JNU teachers' body lauds HC decision on promotions

Shreya.Ghosh@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association (JNUTA) has applauded Delhi High Court's recent orders on December 20, overturning the rejection of promotions to two faculty colleagues by the university in 2018 and 2019.

JNUTA also commended the court's decision that rejected the university's attempt to retrospectively revise the pay of a retired colleague and a subsequent recovery notice.

The teachers' body had earlier alleged that more than 250 of their colleagues have been waiting for their promotions for over 7 years. The matter remained unresolved even after almost two years of the new vice-chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit taking charge.

The decision of the rejected promotions was challenged by two teachers, Vinay Kumar Ambekar and Purva Yadav. They alleged that the university failed to comply with procedures laid down by

the UGC.

DK Lobiyal, president of JNUTA, said that teachers who paid complete obedience to the administration were promoted while others were not on flimsy grounds.

The promotions of 48 teachers were stopped as their names were in an FIR for organising a protest, he said. "The court has vindicated the position maintained by JNUTA that the procedure followed by the university to reject candidates for promotion was a violation of due process," JNUTA said.

The court found that JNU, under former vice-chancellor M Jagadeesh Kumar, currently the chairman of the UGC, did not adhere to due process. It said the constitution of the screening-cum-evaluation committee and the approval of its recommendations by the EC were mere formalities.

"The lack of reasons for rejection and its non-transparent approval by the executive council were deemed arbitrary and opaque," the court said.

## Bharadwaj takes a swipe at temple invite, BJP hits back

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Delhi health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has questioned BJP over the invitation to the upcoming 'Pran Pratista' ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya, asking: "Who is BJP to decide who to invite and who to leave out?"

The consecration ceremony of the temple is on January 22.

Bharadwaj clarified that the "Ram temple belongs to the whole country."

"It is Lord Ram's temple, whoever wants to go will go, whenever they want to go will go," he said.

"Who are they? Why have they taken a contract?" he asked about the BJP.

Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it was sad to see Bharadwaj creating a controversy over invites for the temple consecration.

"He and his party leaders like most other opposition parties on record has opposed to Ram Mandir's construction till four years back and its surprising to see that leaders of these parties are today creating controversy over invites for consecration ceremony," he said.

"His statement smacks of political frustration and we wish to remind Bharadwaj that it's not the BJP but a trust which is inviting eminent personalities,

**After Bharadwaj said 'it's Lord Ram's temple, whoever wants to go will go, whenever they want to go will go', Delhi BJP spokesperson Praveen Shankar Kapoor said it was sad to see him creating a controversy over invites for the temple consecration**

including political leaders," he said.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra had earlier invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the consecration ceremony of the temple. Several political leaders, celebrities and business personalities have been invited.

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said after January 22, arrangements will be made for a darshan of the Ram Lal in Ayodhya from different wards of Delhi. He said January 22 would be celebrated as a festival. "BJP workers will be present in every temple along with LED lights and arrangements to listen to the live speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

He said that Delhi's markets and other places will be decorated after talking to business organisations.



# Lost In Transit! Waiting For Promised Land, They See Their Arts Fade Away

**KATHPUTLI COLONY:** For Conjurers, Snake Charmers & Puppeteers, Shift To New Home A Pipedream

Ridhima.Gupta@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Ishamudin Khan never thought his art would vanish from the streets. The 52-year-old, third-generation street magician learnt the esoteric skills when growing up and toured the globe enthralled people with this sleight of hand. He always believed this work would bring him enough money to give his family a good life. But he lives today with his five family members in a one-room house without a kitchen or toilet at the Kathputli Colony transit camp at Anand Parbat.

Like Khan, many other street artists are living in the transit camp — an enclave of conjurers, snake charmers, acrobats and puppeteers — while their slum colony is redeveloped, which, of course, has now been years in the making. Like Khan, they are all trying to keep their skills relevant enough to be able to feed their families.

More than 2,000 families live in the transit camp. All these families lived in the well-known Kathputli Colony. The colony was demolished in 2017, and the residents were moved to transit camps till the new flats were constructed. In October, TOI had reported that after missing several deadlines, Delhi Development Authority's in-situ slum redevelopment project at Kathputli Colony would be completed soon. Officials had said the allotment of 1 BHK flats to eligible original inhabitants of Kathputli Colony



Acrobat Kailash Chand

Folk singer Shishram and Rajesh Bhat at Kathputli Colony



Photos: Piyal Bhattacharjee



Puppeteer Puran Bhat Street magician Ishamudin Khan

at the multi-storey apartment complex in Shadipur, near Karol Bagh, was likely to start by December.

In the meantime, the survival instinct has pushed

Khan to try his hands at stand-up comedy. "The rich culture of street art has almost disappeared across the country. Stand-up is the newest form of entertainment,

which is why I am trying to write jokes in both Hindi and English to be performed simultaneously with my magic show," revealed Khan. However, for someone who

hasn't received a formal education and comes from an economically weaker section of society, finding his feet in the comedian circles hasn't been easy. "These are elite circles. There are a lot of costs involved, which I am not able to afford," Khan said, adding bitterly, "I want to continue to perform on the streets, but the law does not allow this. Yet, the governments have made no efforts to help the artists. They think we are beggars and have corralled us into a slum to decay and disappear."

Many of the artists have been forced to take up odd jobs for money. Others claimed that unemployment had pushed youngsters towards drug abuse. On the narrow lanes lives puppeteer Puran Bhat, 70. On a winter afternoon, he is on a mat outside his one-room house making a new kathputli (puppet). A native of Rajasthan, Bhat has travelled to many countries showcasing Indian puppetry. "We became deprived of work at the time of the Covid pandemic and I currently have no income. But as an artist, I can't sit idle, so I am making kathputlis for a Ramanavami show for the time when I get work," said the puppeteer.

Bhat's extended family lives in the camp, but some of them had to forsake their traditional art. He said, "In the last few years, many folk arts went extinct. We are fighting poverty and starvation while trying to keep our art alive." He added, "Hume paise nahi chahiye, platform chahiye

(We do not want money, only a platform). But only if the government has intention to preserve the folk art community."

The puppeteer has a vision of Kathputli Colony becoming a global centre for Indian street heritage. "We could have a village-in-the-city, where the artists live, teach and perform. People could have come there to learn traditional skills, such as puppet-making, music, dance, acrobatics and crafts," said Bhat.

Unfortunately, the reality is depressing. "Our children could have taken our art form to a next level. Instead,

## Duo steals 9 phones in a day to pay lawyer, held

Avishek Kumar  
@timesgroup.com

Noida: Two bikers were arrested after a brief gunbattle for stealing nine mobile phones from people walking on roads in a day.

Police said Ghaziabad resident Aniket Kumar (24) and Anshu Yadav (26) of Noida had targeted around 20 people in the past few days to pay the fee of their lawyer who had got them released in a robbery case earlier this month. The duo were most active around Botanical Garden and in sectors 39, 24 and 57.

A video widely circulated on social media showed one of the accused pleading before a policeman with folded hands that he would never commit robberies in the future. Bursting into tears, he tells the cop he has stolen nine

phones in a day to arrange for money for his lawyer.

Police said that after stealing the phones, Aniket and Anshu would destroy the SIM cards and sell the handsets to people saying they needed money urgently for a family emergency.

Amit Kumar, the SHO of Sector 58 police station, said they received a tip-off about the two phone snatchers on Saturday evening.

"So, we deployed police teams at various junctions to look for the two youths on a bike. Around 9pm, we spotted two suspected snatchers and asked them to stop near a signal in Sector 57. But they tried to flee. When cops gave them a chase, they fired at them. Police retaliated, and the accused were hit in their leg. They screamed to a halt and were arrested," the SHO said.

## Delhi sees 10 new Covid-19 cases in 24 hrs

New Delhi: Delhi Health Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said that Delhi recorded 10 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours with no instances of the new JN.1 variant detected so far.

According to latest health report, 599 tests were conducted in the capital, with 10 samples testing positive, Bharadwaj said.

The minister reassured the public by noting that currently, only six Covid-19 positive patients are admitted in hospitals in the city, and the majority of cases are mild.

He urged citizens not to panic but emphasized on the importance of taking precautions. ANI

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# The year courts ducked for cover as bullets flew

Vineet Upadhyay & Abhinav Garg | TNN

New Delhi: A string of important developments in Delhi High Court and the district courts were the highlight of 2023. It was also the year when bullets flew on court premises.

The year began with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) clarifying for the first time in Delhi High Court in January that the PM CARES fund does not constitute a "public authority" and, hence, does not come under the Right to Information Act, 2005. The affidavit was filed in response to a petition by an RTI applicant seeking declaration of the PM CARES Fund as a "state" under Article 12 of the Constitution of India.

Near the end of the year, in November, a Delhi lower court delivered its verdict on one of the most talked about murders in the city — the Soumya Vishwanathan case of 2008. The four men suspected

of murdering the TV journalist were handed two life terms. They had attempted to rob Soumya and while chasing her had shot and killed her. Soumya's 82-year-old father seemed to have lived and fought with all his will for the verdict. A few days after the sentence was awarded, MK Vishwanathan passed away.

Another talked-about case that was decided this year was that of the sexual harassment charges against Haryana politician Gopal Kanda. He was acquitted. Geetika Sharma, the woman he had allegedly harassed, died by suicide in 2012. Her brother, Ankit, has said that he was "immensely disappointed with the verdict" and is likely to appeal.

## 2023 IN A NUTSHELL

- A lower court delivered its verdict in the **Soumya Vishwanathan case of 2008**; four suspected of killing the journalist were given two life terms
- **PMO in January 2023 clarified for the first time in Delhi HC** that the PM CARES fund does not constitute a 'public authority' and, hence, does not come under the Right to Information Act, 2005
- **Haryana politician Gopal Kanda was acquitted** in the Geetika Sharma harassment case
- **Women wrestlers alleged sexual harassment** by former WFI chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh. The case is still in court

- A brawl among two groups of lawyers led to opening of fire in the **Tis Hazari Courts Complex** in July. Three advocates were arrested



- After Satyendar Jain, AAP's Manish Sisodia **jailed in cases linked to the Delhi excise policy and money laundering**
- **Court, while discharging 11 people in riots cases**, including Sharjeel Imam, Safoora Zargar and Asif Iqbal Tanha, said the police had filed an 'ill-conceived' chargesheet. The police brass later approached Delhi HC seeking to get the remarks

- expunged, which HC later did
- **Police filed an a 6,000-page chargesheet** on details of how Aaftab Poonawala hacked Shradha Walkar's body into 35 pieces
- **Suspended lawyer Kameshwar Kumar Singh shot at a woman in Saket court**

of murdering the TV journalist were handed two life terms. They had attempted to rob Soumya and while chasing her had shot and killed her. Soumya's 82-year-old father seemed to have lived and fought with all his will for the verdict. A few days after the sentence was awarded, MK Vishwanathan passed away.

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This year also saw the start of a sexual harassment case that is nowhere close to its end and has the potential to leave a mark on future cases. Several leading women wrest-

who was then in a Vipassana retreat. The coming year is sure to see more on this case.

Delhi Police in 2023 faced serious music in an additional sessions court that was hearing the 2020 Delhi riots cases. The court, while discharging 11 people — among them Sharjeel Imam, Safoora Zargar, Asif Iqbal Tanha — said the police had filed an "ill-conceived" chargesheet. It said the 11 were made "scapegoats" because the police were unable to arrest the real culprits. The shaken police top brass later approached Delhi High Court seeking to get the remarks expunged.

Grisly crimes often stay in the news for longer. Aftab Poonawala and how he allegedly murdered his live-in partner Shradha Walkar is likely to live in public memory as did the Nirbhaya rape and murder and the Jessica Lal cases. Aftab allegedly

Hazari court complex in July. Three advocates were arrested.

The high court in 2023 ordered a clean-up of the Mehrauli Archaeological Park but not before giving the affected residents a chance to be heard. However, local people living in the Sunder Nursery jhuggi cluster were not so fortunate as they couldn't prove they were protected from eviction and had to yield to demolition squads.

The court also dealt with the screening of the controversial BBC documentary "India: The Modi Question". In July, Delhi University approached the high court challenging a single-judge order setting aside the debarring of NSUI leader Lokesh Chugh for a year for his alleged involvement in the screening of the documentary on the campus. The court set aside DU's plea but said the university was free to act on its own.

## Grisly murders, phone seizures kept Tihar in news

Rajshankar.Jha@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: On a hot morning in May, Delhiites woke up to the visuals of a horrific murder unfolding before them as the CCTV footage of an inmate being stabbed with ice-picks and improvised knives by a group of rival inmates inside the maximum-security prison, Tihar, went viral.

Gangster Sunil Maan alias Tiltu Tajpuria was stabbed over 100 times during a ten-minute-long dance of death. Tajpuria's was not an isolated case. Just a month

earlier, another gangster Prince Teotia was killed during a gangwar that broke out in Tihar's jail number 3. The fierce clash also left several inmates injured.

The year began with Tihar officials complaining that their former prison minister, then lodged in Tihar, had been threatening them to seek favours. Just a few days before that, an unprecedented action was taken by the government to suspend a serving director general of Tihar. In January, Tihar officials started searching the barracks to fish out banned substances. To

their shock, they found 115 mobile phones besides pen drives, improvised knives, etc. The seizures continued through the year.

The large part of 2023 for Tihar was spent in recovering from the twin killings. The killings prompted a slew of measures to thwart any such incident in the future. Next year looks promising as the first phase of the new prison complex being constructed in Narela is set to be completed. An overcrowded prison plans to shift out 250 high-risk inmates, which would take some pressure off its crumbling infrastructure.

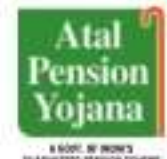
**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**Office of the Principal, BSMC, BANKURA, Pin: 722102**  
**TENDER NOTICE**  
Principal, BSMC, Bankura, invites E-Tender (2" call) for supply & installation of medical equipment for the dept. of Biochemistry at BSMC, Bankura vide Memo No. BSMC/5152, dt. 28/12/2023. Interested bidder may visit the website [www.wbteenders.gov.in](http://www.wbteenders.gov.in) / [www.bsmcmedicalcollege.org.in](http://www.bsmcmedicalcollege.org.in) & [www.wbteenders.gov.in](http://www.wbteenders.gov.in) for further details. Sd/- Principal, BSMC, BANKURA ICA-T26848(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**NOTICE INVITING TENDER**  
Executive Engineer, Howrah Highway Division, P.W. (Roads) Directorate invite NIT (e) No.- 14 of 2023-24 bearing tender id no. 2023-SH-632236.1 in the website: <http://tender.wb.nic.in> details name of work mentioned under above NIT. Interested contractor/ Agencies requested to visit above website. Any other information please contact the office of the Executive Engineer, Howrah Highway Division, P.W.(Roads) Directorate during working hours. Sd/- J. SAMANTA, Executive Engineer, Howrah Highway Division, Public Works (Roads) Directorate. ICA-T26882(2)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**Notice Inviting e-Tender**  
The e-Tender is being invited by the undersigned for and on behalf of the Governor of West Bengal against NIT No.- 8 of 2023-24 of SE, SWC, SS, PW.Dte. for the following work from the eligible Contractors as mentioned in the NIT. The details are available and Online Submission of bid is permitted in the website: <http://wbteenders.gov.in> from 14:00 Hrs. on 05.01.2024 upto 14:00 Hrs. on 27.01.2024. Tender ID- 2023-WBPWD-633469.1. Construction of proposed Industrial Shed for Steel Furniture Cluster, Daspur-II at Gopigong, Kheput under Daspur-II Block, District Paschim Medinipur (Project ID: CS222375915000). Estimated Amount: Rs.1,95,47,793.00 & Earnest Money: Rs.3,90,956.00. Sd/- Superintending Engineer, South Western Circle, Social Sector, PW.Dte. ICA-T26886(3)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**PWD TENDER NOTICE**  
Executive Engineer, PWD, Electrical Construction Division invites online e-Tender for the work of "Replacement of damaged HPSV fittings for improvement of illumination level at the common street of the State Institute of Physical Education for Women, Hastings House College campus." eNIT No.- WBSPWD/EC/ENIT41(2nd Call)/2023-24. Tender ID: 2023-PWDE-633505.1. Bid submission start date (online): 04.01.2024 from 02:00 P.M. Bid submission closing date (online): 13.01.2024 upto 11:30 A.M. Corrigendum if any will be published in website only. Details of N.I.T. and Tender documents may be downloaded from: <http://wbteenders.gov.in> Sd/- B.Dutta, Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Electrical Construction Division. ICA-T26879(2)/2023

**GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL**  
**PWD TENDER NOTICE**  
Executive Engineer PWD, Kolkata Central Division invites Online tender for 4 (Four) no. of works vide NIT No. 33/KCD of 2023-24. Date of uploading of N.I.T Documents (Online) (Publishing date): 05/01/2024. Documents download start date (online): 05.01.2024 from 10:50 A.M. Documents download end date (online): 19.01.2024 upto 11:00 A.M. Technical & financial bid proposal Submission end date (Online): 19.01.2024 upto 11:30 A.M. Bid opening date for Technical evaluation (Online): 22.01.2024 from 12:00 P.M. Details may be seen in the Website [www.pwdwb.in](http://www.pwdwb.in) Further corrigendum/addendum if any will be published seen in the above Website. Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD, Kolkata Central Division. ICA-T26880(3)/2023



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# J&K terror incidents fell to 44 in 2023 from 228 in 2018: MHA

‘Nil’ Incidents Of Organised Hartals And Stone-Pelting Last Year

Bharti.Jain@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The bygone year seems to have seen the back of bandhs and street violence in Jammu and Kashmir with ‘nil’ incidents of organised hartals and organised stone-pelting related to terrorism and separatism recorded until December 15, as against 52 hartals and 1,221 stone-pelting incidents in 2018, the year before the nullification of Article 370.

The home ministry, in a year-end account of its actions and achievements, said terrorist-initiated incidents in J&K were down to 44 in 2023 (until December 15) from 228 in 2018. During the period under comparison, encounters fell to 48 from 189, civilians killed to 13 from 55 and security personnel fatalities to 26 from 91.

Tourism sector in the UT of J&K saw unprecedented growth in 2023 with more than 1.9 crore incoming tourists. Amarnath Yatra witnessed 4.4 lakh yatris paying obeisance at the holy cave, which is the highest figure in the last 10 years.

Nationally, the home ministry underlined the enactment of three criminal justice laws — Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam — as an important achievement, saying that it implemented PM Narendra Modi’s vision to end all vestiges of slavery by replacing British-



People throng the Lal Chowk In Srinagar on the eve of New Year. Over 1.9 crore tourists visited Kashmir in 2023

era criminal codes and laws.

On the fight against terror, the MHA recalled the designation of four organisations — The Resistance Front (TRF), People’s Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF), Jammu and Kashmir Ghaznavi Force and Khalistan Tiger Force — as ‘terrorist organisations’ under UAPA in 2023. Seven terrorists were declared as ‘individual terrorists’ under UAPA. Also, Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Muslim League Jammu Kashmir (Masarat Alam faction) and Tehreek-e-Hurriyat were designated as ‘unlawful associations’ under UAPA for a period of five years as part of the Modi government’s ‘zero-tolerance policy against terrorism’.

The ministry made a mention of various peace pacts signed with insurgent groups as well as the settlement of inter-state border

disputes in the north-east region. Border issues between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh were sorted out through an agreement signed in the presence of homeminister Amit Shah in April. Also, tripartite pacts were inked with Dimasas outposts in April and with the Ulfa faction led by Arabinda Rajkhowa on December 29. For the first time, UNLF, a Valley-based Manipuri armed outfit, agreed to return to the mainstream by abjuring violence and declaring allegiance to the Constitution of India, the home ministry said.

The peace settlements, coupled with the complete removal of AFSPA from Tripura and Meghalaya and its partial lifting in Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, have seen a 73% reduction in extremist incidents, 71% fall in fatalities of security forces and 86% de-

cline in civilian deaths in the north-east region.

On the ethnic violence in Manipur that broke out in May, the home ministry said various remedial measures were taken including one-time special assistance of Rs 102 crore for running relief and rehabilitation schemes for those affected by the violence; and a Rs 89 crore grant for the scheme of complementary nutrition and hygiene support to people living in relief camps.

On the Left-wing extremism (LWE) front, MHA echoed Shah’s assurance that it would be completely uprooted in the next two years. Vacuum areas, the ministry said, have been shrinking as Maoist camps were eliminated in Barmasia and Chakarbanda in Bihar and Budha Pahad and Parasnath in Jharkhand. So far, 195 new camps of central forces have been established in LWE areas, with 44 more on the anvil. There has been a decline of over 52% in LWE violence and 69% in total deaths (including that of civilians and security personnel) during the period 2014-2023 as compared to the period 2005-2014.

On the sustained crackdown on drugs and narcotics trafficking networks, MHA said 10 lakh kg of drugs worth over Rs 12,000 crore was destroyed in 2023.

## Cops put GPS anklet on J&K terror suspect out on interim bail

Jammu: J&K Police have put a GPS anklet on a terror case suspect to monitor his movements while he is out on interim bail. This is the second recent instance of such devices being used, reports Sanjay Khajuria.

The anklet was fitted Saturday on Khurshed Ahmed in Udhampur district on the orders of a Jammu NIA court four days ago. Ahmed is native of Doda district in Jammu and was arrested last year.

J&K Police claimed it became the first force in the country to use such GPS anklets for UAPA suspects on bail, strapping the device on an accused, Ghulam Mohd Bhat, on November 5 this year. Bhat is on trial for alleged links with various terror outfits, including Hizbul Mujahideen.

The device is already used in countries like the US, UK, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Apart from helping track accused on bail, parole and house arrest, it helps decongest prisons.

## J&K cops offer reward up to ₹12L for info on terrorist activities

Jammu: In an attempt to curb ‘anti-national activities’ in the Union Territory, the J&K police announced cash reward of up to Rs 12.50 lakh for people who provide information and intelligence on trans-border tunnels, drones, narcotics, terror activities and terrorists, reports Sanjay Khajuria.

The cash reward for providing information about trans-border tunnels used by anti-national elements is Rs 5 lakh, according to the J&K Police.

Further, the police announced Rs 3 lakh reward for those who sight drones from the across the border and provide information about the same.

## Boy, 6, sodomised, killed; minor held

Prayagraj: Three days after the body of a missing six-year-old boy was found inside a dilapidated structure at Haldi Kalan Mugari village in UP’s Prayagraj district, a joint team of the Special Operations Group and the Industrial Area police on Sunday took into custody a 13-year-old boy on charges of sodomy and murder. Station Officer Mahesh Mishra told

TOI, “A six-year-old boy was found murdered inside an abandoned structure at Haldi Kalan Mugari village on Thursday morning. The little boy had gone missing under mysterious circumstances while playing outside his house on Wednesday and on the basis of his father’s complaint, the police lodged an FIR under various sections of IPC and the PoCSO Act.” TNN



**OFFICE OF THE GENERAL MANAGER , CONSTRUCTION WING.**  
**UTTARAKHAND PEYJAL NIGAM**  
E-32 JUDGE FARM HALDWANI, DISTT.- NAINITAL (PIN 263139)  
Letter No.: 3340/Nivida-Anubandh/Lohaghat/290  
Date : 30-12-2023

**E-Tender Notice**

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Tender Value without GST (Rs. In Lakh)	Period of Completion
1.	CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDING WORKS FOR 50 BEDDED AYUSH HOSPITAL AT TANAKPUR, DISTT-CHAMPAAWAT.	Rs. 1076.28	18 Months
2.	CONSTRUCTION OF PROPOSED 66 BEDDED GIRLS HOSTEL BUILDING FOR Dr. A.P.J. ABDUL KALAM INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY TANAKPUR, DISTT-CHAMPAAWAT.	Rs. 392.12	18 Months

**3.Date and Time of availability of Bid documents in the portal:** 01-01-2024 (17.00 hrs)  
**4.Online Bid submission: End date :-** 18-01-2024 (17.00 hrs)  
**5.Date & Time of Technical bid Opening :-** 20-01-2024 (11.00 hrs)  
**6.Name and Address of the Officer inviting bid :-** General Manager (Kumaon), Nirman Wing, Uttarakhand Pey Jal Nigam, Haldwani.  
**7.Pre-bid meeting details (if required) Date & Place :-** 06-01-2024 (11.00 hrs) Project Manager Construction Unit, Uttarakhand Peyjal Nigam, Lohaghat.  
**8.For further details, details of subsequent Amendment / correction documentation etc. may be obtained from the e-Procurement portal [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in)**  
**GENERAL MANAGER**



**GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA**  
**COMMISSIONERATE OF HEALTH SERVICES, MUMBAI.**  
Procurement Cell, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Arogya Bhavan, St. Georges Hospital Compound, Mumbai - 400 001.  
• E-mail - [procurementcell@gmail.com](mailto:procurementcell@gmail.com)



**NHM**  
राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य मिशन महाराष्ट्र

**TENDER NOTICE**

**Date :-29.12.2023**

Joint Director of Health Services (Procurement Cell), Mumbai invites online tender for fixing Rate contract (for 2 years) in two envelope systems from the eligible bidders for following items.

Sr. No.	Tender No.	Name of Item	Period of sale, preparation & submission of bid	Date of Pre bid meeting	Date of Bid Closing	Bid Opening
1	E-17	1) Surgeon dress, 2) Patient Dress (Male) 3) Patient Dress (Female)	1-01-2024 to 12-01-2024 up to 14.00	3-01-2024 at 14:00 Hrs	12-01-2024 (14.00 Hrs.)	15-01-2024 (14.00 Hrs.)

**1. For detailed information, the interested Service Providers may visit the <https://mahatenders.gov.in>.**  
**2. The Jt. Director of Health Services, (P. Cell) Mumbai reserves the right to increase or decrease the quantity to be purchased and also reserves the right to cancel all the tenders without giving any reason to.**

For e-tendering help/information, please contact.  
Website: - <https://mahatenders.gov.in>.  
Contact:- Toll-free Number: 1800-419-3436; 1800-102-3436  
Email – [procurementcell@gmail.com](mailto:procurementcell@gmail.com)

**Jt. Director of Health Services (Procurement Cell), Mumbai**

## Punjab cops bust racket smuggling drugs, arms

Amritsar: Police on Sunday said they busted a cross-border drug and arms smuggling racket, with the arrest of 2 key operators of a US-based smuggler and recovered 19 kg heroin, 7 pistols, and Rs 23 lakh in cash from the suspects.

Gurpreet Singh Bhullar, commissioner of police, Amritsar, said the suspects are Sandeep Singh alias Laddi, a resident of Guru ki Wadali, Amritsar, and Roshan, a resident of Heir, Amritsar.

The drug racket is being operated by US-based smuggler, Manpreet alias Mannu Mahawa, Bhullar said.

Bhullar said police teams recovered 19 kg heroin, Rs 23 lakh in cash, 7 pistols — including one sophisticated 9mm Glock, three .30 bore pistols, and three .32 bore pistols — along with Pakistan-stamped ammunition, a currency counting machine, drone equipment, including a remote controller and spare fans, from the possession of the duo. Police impounded a Hyundai Verna in which the suspects were going to supply the consignment and registered a case against the duo under the NDPS Act. TNN

## Pak terrorists smuggling gold via Goa airports: DRI

Panaji: Pakistani terrorists based in the Middle East are involved in gold smuggling through the airports in touristy Goa and funds generated from these illicit operations are allegedly used to finance antinational activities in India, reports Murari Shetye. This was revealed during recent investigations by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) in Goa.

Over the past three months, DRI has seized 3kg of gold worth Rs 10 crore, with smugglers reportedly utilising both the airport at Mopa and the older airport at Dabolim for smuggling. Mounting cases prompted the agency to heighten its vigilance and activate sources to catch the smugglers. DRI suspects that gold is being smuggled through Mopa every day.

“When international flights began operations from Mopa airport, smugglers assessed its vulnerabilities,” DRI said.

“They were able to dodge the checks and started using the airport to smuggle gold,” DRI added.



**Power Transmission Corporation of Uttarakhand Ltd.**  
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Enterprise)  
“Vidyut Bhawan” Near L.S.B.T. Crossing, Saharanpur Road, Majra, Dehradun-248002, Corporate ID U40101UR2004001020875, Tel. No. 9135-2642711

**E-TENDER CORRIGENDUM-5**

The last date of the bid submission of E-Tender for “Construction of 132 kV & 66 kV Bays and installation of 3x20 MVA, 132/66 kV Transformers at 132 kV Substation Simli” against tender specification no. PTCUL/E-Tender/C&P-I/SS-08/2023-24 is hereby extended **upto 18.01.2024, 15:00 Hrs.** For more details please visit e-tender website [www.uktenders.gov.in](http://www.uktenders.gov.in) (tender id no. 2023\_PTCU1\_62908\_1) and for e-tender notice our website [www.ptcul.org](http://www.ptcul.org). All other terms and conditions shall remain same.

For any assistance on E-Tendering, please contact +91-8899890000.

**Ro No. 1703/HQPU/PTCUL, Dated: 30.12.2023**

**Superintending Engineer (C&P-I)**

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**MAHARASHTRA JEEVAN PRADHIKARAN**  
(e-Tender Notice No : 03 for the Year 2023-2024)  
(Second Call)

Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran Mumbai invites online RFP for Selection of an agency for ‘Digitization of physical files/records with Documents Management System’ for Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran (MJP) under Least cost basis (L1) The detailed e-tender document for the above is available at <https://www.mahatenders.gov.in>  
Date: 01/01/2024

**Sd/-**  
**Chief Administrative Officer**  
**Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran,**  
**Mumbai**

**DGIPR/2023-2024/6186**



**Dakshin Gujarat Vij Company Limited**  
CIN U40102GJ2003SGC042909  
Regd. & Corp. Office : ‘Urja Sadan’,  
N. V. Road, Kapodara Char Rasta, Surat 395 006 GUJARAT  
DGVCIL Toll Free No. 19123 (or 1800 233 3003)

**Tender Notice**

Details are available on [www.dgvcl.com](http://www.dgvcl.com) (for view and download tender documents) and <https://tender.nprocure.com> (for view, download and online tender submission).

Sr. No.	Tender No.
1	DGVCL/SP/ 2413 /Underground Cable Fault Detector

**Note:** Bidders may visit the above website/s for regular updates till opening of the tender. **ACE (P), DGVCL, Surat.**



**CENTRE FOR RAILWAY INFORMATION SYSTEMS**  
Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, New Delhi-110014

**Tender No. 01235357 Subject:**  
Supply, Installation & Commissioning of IP based Closed Circuit Television Surveillance System (CCTVSS) in Coaches as per RDSO Specification RDSO/SPN/TC/ 106/2022, Version 2.1 or latest with 03 years warranty followed by 05 years CAMC. **Pre-Bid meeting:** 11.01.2024 (Thursday) at 15:00 Hrs. at Conference Hall, CRIS, IPTI Building, Near ITO, New Delhi-110002 **Date of closing: 31.01.2024 (Wednesday) at 15:30 Hrs.** Tender Documents can be downloaded from Website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). For future modification/ extensions, visit [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

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24 Indian icons share their predictions for 2024.  
Pick up a copy of The Economic Times today.





## How art can bring colour, joy to lives of special needs children

Bulbul Sharma

From prehistoric times when human beings etched impressions of their hands on a cave wall, art has woven its magic in our lives. But it becomes an even more powerful tool when it touches the lives of special needs children, encouraging them, motivating them, and somehow helping them to cope with the often hostile, outside world.

The process of creating art, whether it is a simple exercise of drawing with a pencil or a complex, multi-layered composition, brings a sense of wellbeing and calm to most children but the process really helps children with special needs by enabling them to connect their minds to their hearts.

Any kind of art activity, whether it is drawing, painting or working with clay, carries within itself an immense treasure house of wellbeing. Children know the secret, healing power and joy of creating art from the time they can hold a crayon in their hands and that is why they can draw or paint for hours without getting bored or restless. Special children lose their inhibitions and eagerly reach out for paint brushes and crayons often overcoming their limited mobility.

Creating art is also a perfect way of encouraging special needs children to bond with their family members. As adults we are distracted by the endless demands on our stressful lives and, thus, many of us lose that innate ability to connect with our creative energies. Fortunately, the spark never dies out and it only takes a simple art activity like painting with your child to rekindle that close bond. Creating art, looking at a work of art or even watching an artist at work helps children feel calm, joyous and happy.

There are many moments of stress or anxiety in a special child's life and I find



Encourage kids to draw simple shapes

that the one exercise that helps the child is simply drawing large circles on a sheet of paper with different coloured crayons. As their hand moves on the paper, their eyes start following the movement and slowly their breathing becomes calm and steady. Studies show that art activities help to build better hand-eye coordination, improve concentration and thus play an important part in art therapy as well as being an effective teaching tool for a variety of subjects.

Special needs children with restricted movements and hyperactive children benefit hugely by drawing simple, random shapes or tearing paper to create collages. Even children who are withdrawn and not willing to take part in any group activity will happily join in an art activity to create a large work of art, since they do not feel threatened nor do they have any fear of being judged when they jostle each other to paint images on a huge 'community' canvas.

Splashing paint on a canvas, and drawing lines on a sheet of paper brings an immense feeling of joy to most children, and special needs children enjoy the process with all their hearts. It does not matter if a perfect work of art is not being created here; what truly matters is that it brings joy and happiness to their hearts.

Bulbul Sharma is a writer and an artist. She teaches art to children with special needs

## Fire at glove factory in Maharashtra kills 6 workers

Prasad.Joshi@timesgroup.com

**Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar:** At least six workers were killed in a devastating fire at Sunshine Enterprises, a glove and safety equipment manufacturing unit in the Waluj industrial area near Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar of Maharashtra in the early hours of Sunday.

Sources said 17 people were present on the premises and 11 of them, including the labour contractor and his two children, managed to escape.

The victims were identified as Mohammed Mushtaq Ibrahim, 32, Kushar Aalam Jafaruddin, 37, Mohammed Iqbal Ehrar, 17, Lallan Singh, 60, Shaikh Riyaz, 32 — all from Madhubani district of Bihar — and Mohammed Margab, 32, from Jalna district of Maharashtra.

Expressing grief, CM Eknath Shinde announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh for the families of the deceased workers and free treatment for the injured at the state-run hospital.

The fire broke out around 1am, leading to a distress call received by the fire brigade officials in Waluj 20 minutes later. Fire engines from various units, including the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Municipal Corporation and Bajaj Auto, were promptly dispatched to the factory.

"The factory unit is a single-storey structure. By the time we reached the site, the factory and the margin area surrounding it, measuring around 5,000 sq ft, was almost completely engulfed in flames. There was thick smoke and intense heat emanating from all sides of the factory," said Rajesh Gharat, the MIDC Waluj fire officer.

MIDC Waluj police station's inspector Ganesh Tathe said a case has been registered against the labour contractor Mohammed Hasinoddin Shaikh, who is from Bihar, and factory owner Saber Khan Shabbir Khan Pathan, a local resident, invoking sections related to culpable homicide, negligent conduct, and criminal acts.

## Navy boosts surveillance amid surge in ship attacks

Deploys Destroyers, Frigate In Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea

Surendra Singh &amp; Newton Sequeira | TNN

**New Delhi/Panaji:** In the wake of the recent drone strikes on India-bound commercial ships and increased attacks from Iran-backed Houthi rebels, the defence ministry on Sunday that "Indian Navy has enhanced maritime surveillance" by deploying task groups comprising destroyers and a frigate in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Central & North Arabian Sea to protect its commercial assets and interest even as Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar has issued directions to the Navy to take all possible actions to enhance security and look out for any suspicious activity in the Arabian Sea region.

The Navy's statement came on a day when another commercial ship, Singapore-



MV Chem Pluto was hit by a drone launched from Iran in the Indian Ocean. The recent attacks on merchant ships have hit world trade

flagged, Denmark-owned Maersk Hangzhou, and US Navy helicopters came under ballistic missile attacks from "four Iranian-backed Houthi small boats in the Red Sea", the US Central Command (Centcom) said.

The US Navy foiled the missile attacks on the commercial ship and its helicopters by attacking the boats

and in the process sinking three of the four boats with the armed crew. Soon after the attack on its vessel, Maersk has paused all sailing through the Red Sea for 48 hours.

The recent attacks on merchant ships have disrupted world trade, with major shipping companies taking the longer and costlier

route around Africa's Cape of Good Hope rather than through the Suez Canal. The Red Sea is the entry point for ships using the Suez Canal, which handles about 12% of global trade and vital for the movement of goods between Asia and Europe.

In a statement, the defence ministry said "... Indian Navy has substantially enhanced maritime surveillance efforts in the Central/ North Arabian Sea and augmented force levels. Task groups comprising destroyers and frigates have been deployed to undertake maritime security operations and render assistance to merchant vessels in case of any incident."

The Navy has deployed INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, INS Mormugao, INS Chennai and INS Visakhapatnam in the Arabian Sea region.

## Govt building strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem: Rajnath

Kangkan.Kalita | @timesgroup.com

**Guwahati:** Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said keeping in mind the aspirations and capabilities of a New India, the country needs strategic autonomy and the government is developing a strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem to achieve that.

He was speaking at the 21st convocation of Tezpur University (TU), a central varsity located near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in northern Assam. Tezpur is an important Army base and the headquarters of the 4 Corps, which is responsible for the security of India's northern boundary with China in the Tawang sector.



Rajnath Singh during the 21st convocation ceremony of the Tezpur University in Sonitpur district of Assam on Sunday

The defence minister asked TU to put forth before the Centre its request to set up a centre for defence studies, proposed to be named after Ahom general Lachit

Borphukan, on its premises in Tezpur. The central university started teaching soldiers, deployed along the LAC, to read and write Mandarin, including military terminologies, from 2023.

Stating that the country's domestic defence production has touched Rs 1.08 lakh crore for the first time, Singh said India's defence sector is scaling new heights after the present government under PM Narendra Modi set a mammoth target to make India self-reliant or 'atma nirbhar' in the defence sector.

"We are the first such government, which has put restrictions on ourselves so far as import of arms and weapons is concerned," Singh said, reminding the gathering of the fifth positive indi-

genisation list under which 509 defence equipment will be produced in India by the people of the country.

"In addition, we have also issued the fourth positive indigenisation list of defence PSUs, in which 4,666 items have been identified, which will now be manufactured in our country," he said.

The defence minister further highlighted that the total value of the country's defence exports has gone up from Rs 1,521 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 15,920 crore in 2022-23, which is an almost tenfold increase.

"India is no longer tolerant of the 'let-it-be' approach. Today, under the leadership of PM Modi, the New India believes in the 'let's-do-it' approach," he said.

## BTech grad held for selling drugs on NY eve in Hyd

**Hyderabad:** The task force police of the city arrested 2 people, including a BTech graduate from a well-known private university in Punjab, from outside a popular wine store in Jubilee Hills on New Year's eve over the charge of selling MDMA, cocaine, and

brown sugar to revellers. Police said the engineer even raised funds through loan apps to buy the drugs.

Police seized 100 grams of MDMA, 29 grams of brown sugar, and 2 grams of cocaine from the possession of the duo, S Leela Naveen Sai and B

Sai Teja, and booked them for violation of the NDPS Act.

"The accused decided to earn quick money to clear debts and hatched a plan to sell drugs to customers in Hyderabad. They thought New Year's Eve would be ideal to find buyers," police said. TNN

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## V Srinivas new chief of Southern Naval Command

**New Delhi/Panaji:** Vice admiral V Srinivas took charge as the 30th Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Southern Naval Command in a ceremonial parade at the naval base in Kochi on Sunday.

He succeeded vice admiral M A Hampiholi, who retired after a distinguished four-decade career in Navy. TNN

**CHITTARANJAN LOCOMOTIVE WORKS**  
**CORRIGENDUM**  
 No. 75/Paper publication/Genl (Mech), Dated: 28.12.2023. The following corrigendum has been carried out in respect of the Tender No. 75233842A schedule to be opened on 29.12.2023 : SL No.: [01]; Particulars: TOD/Tender Opening Date; Tender No.: 75233842A; Opening Date: To be read as 19.01.2024 instead of 29.12.2023; Qty.: 3279 Nos. [PR4/276] AMM/M/CLW/Chittaranjan Like us on: [www.facebook.com/clw/railways](https://www.facebook.com/clw/railways)

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**TENDER Notice No. OHE-CN-DyCEE-23-24-19-202**  
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For and on behalf of The President of India, The Dy. Chief Electrical Engineer/OHE, Construction, Southern Railway, Chennai Egmore invites E-Tender for the following works.  
**Name of work : 25kV Traction Over Head Equipment (OHE) modification works in connection with the 3rd & 4th Line connectivity to Road 1 & 2 (MAS end) of Arakkonam Yard in Chennai Division of Southern Railway.**  
**Tender Value : Rs. 8,24,62,545.19/- Bid Security : Rs. 5,62,300.00**  
**Tender closing date and time : 25.01.2024 at 15.00 hrs.**  
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## MoD denies tableau bias, Punjab hits back

Surendra.Singh@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Calling the "discrimination" charge of Punjab, Delhi and West Bengal for rejecting their state tableaux "baseless", the ministry of defence on Sunday clarified that their tableaux were not included in the Republic Day 2024 parade as they were not aligned with the broader themes of this year's tableau.

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann criticised the BJP-led government for not including the state's tableau in the parade and said that both Punjab and Delhi were excluded from the list of states whose tableaux have been selected for the parade on January 26.

In its response, the defence ministry issued a statement saying tableau proposals from states, UTs and central ministries or departments are evaluated by an "expert committee" comprising eminent persons in the fields of art, culture, painting, sculpture, music, architecture and chore-



States and UTs not selected for the R-Day parade were being invited to showcase their tableaux in Bharat Parv at the Red Fort, the defence ministry said

ography. "The tableau proposal of Punjab was considered in first three rounds of meeting of the expert committee. After the third round, the tableau of Punjab could not be taken forward by the expert committee for further consideration for not aligning to the broader themes of this year's tab-

## Insult to martyrs, says Punjab CM Mann

The Punjab government on Sunday hit back at the Centre, saying the exclusion of its tableau was an "insult to the martyrs". CM Bhagwant Mann declined the ministry's invitation to instead display the state tableau — which is themed on the freedom movement — at Bharat Parv, scheduled to be held at Red Fort from January 23 to 31. "The Punjab government will not send its tableau in the 'rejected categories list' of the Narendra Modi-led central government as the country's martyrs do not need an NOC from BJP," Mann said. TNN

leau," it said. It also said that states and UTs not selected for the R-Day parade 2024 were being invited to showcase their tableaux in Bharat Parv at Red Fort from January 23-31 in accordance with a MoU signed with the states and UTs.

## Part of oppn bloc, says AAP, focuses on LS, Haryana polls

Ambika.Pandit@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Setting in motion preparations for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said as a member of the 'INDIA' group of opposition parties, the party would put up a strong fight on whichever seats came its way after seat-sharing talks.

"AAP is part of the INDIA group. Whatever seats we get, we will fight with all our might and win them," Kejriwal said at AAP's national

am continuously in touch with lawyers. It's a very good thing that even while in jail, all our leaders' spirits are still very high. On the day Manish Sisodia's (former deputy CM) bail was cancelled, he sent a message saying, 'It's okay, I'll stay in jail for as many days as needed. This entire case is fabricated, and my struggle will continue', Kejriwal said. He added that party workers should be ready "to go to jail for the paths we have chosen for the public good".

The national executive and national council meeting held virtually was attended by officer-bearers from across states. Kejriwal addressed the meeting from Delhi, where Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann and AAP national organisation general secretary Sandeep Pathak were also present.

Kejriwal urged the party to focus on its organisational set-up. The party also plans to focus on creation of national wings focussed on various sectors like the youth and women for a wider outreach.

He further said that because of AAP, opposition parties were compelled to discuss schools and hospitals. "Now, these people have replaced manifesto with 'guarantee' term stolen from us. They have started talking about 'Modi's guarantee' and 'Congress's guarantee'. These people have given guarantees to the public, but none of them fulfilled them because their intentions are not right, whereas we are fulfilling all our guarantees," Kejriwal said.

"In Delhi, due to obstructions created by the LG and the central government, we set up 550 mohalla clinics but in Punjab, 662 aam aadmi clinics (mohalla clinics) are operational now and by January 26, the number will reach 750 in just two years," he said.



**Government of Jammu & Kashmir**  
**Office of the Executive Engineer, Trans. Line Maintt.**  
**Division-VII, JKPTCL Bemina, Srinagar-190010**  
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**EXTENSION NOTICE-I**  
 Due to poor response, the last date for submission of bids in respect of e-NIT No. LMD-VII/22 of 2023 dated : 07-12-2023 for "Supply of Lattice Type galvanized Tower Super Structures comprising of HT and MS Steels including Nuts and Bolts with washers for 220kV Transmission Line damaged due to snowfall of 2019 in Kashmir Valley" is hereby extended with revised critical dates as under.

1. Existing e-bids submission end date and time	29-12-2023 (14:00 Hrs)
2. Extended e-bids submission end date and time	10-01-2024 (14:00 Hrs)
3. Online techno commercial e-bid opening date and time	11-01-2024 (12:00 Hrs)

**All other terms and conditions of e-NIT will remain unchanged.**  
**Sd- Executive Engineer**  
**TLMD-VII, Bemina Srinagar.**  
 No. TLMD-7/TS/2912-15  
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# From today, packaged items to mention price per unit

## Importers Have To Cite Month, Year Of Manufacturing

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: From Monday, all manufacturers and importers of packaged items will have to mention the price of products per unit in addition to the overall MRP on packets, a decision that is being implemented after being pushed back several times. The government has also made it mandatory for producers and importers to mention the month and year of manufacturing.

So far, importers had the option to mention the month and year in which the commodity was manufactured or pre-packed or imported on the package. So far, importers preferred mentioning the date of import. The new rule, which does away with the provision of mentioning the month and year of 'pre-packed or imported', will ensure consumers know the exact age of the products.

According to the new rule, manufacturers and importers now need to mention the unit price per kg or per litre for items weighing more than a kg or litre. Similarly, for items weighing less than a kg or litre, the unit price has to be mentioned in per gram or millilitre (ml). For pre-packed items with a length of more than one metre, the unit price will be in per



The consumer affairs ministry had first notified the changes in November 2021 and had set April 2022 as deadline for enforcement of these rules. But it was extended in consultation with the industry to give them time to make changes

metre and for items less than one metre, it will be per cm.

Packed items which have more than one unit of the product, such as pencils or pens, will also mention the price per piece in addition to the MRP. "This will help buyers to have a better idea for making the right choice. Several players have started compliance and from January 1, this becomes mandatory. Violation of the norm will attract penal action as per rules," said an official.

The consumer affairs ministry had first notified the changes in November 2021 and had set April 2022 as deadline for enforcement of these rules. But it was extended in consultation with the industry to give them time to make changes.

The ministry also removed the 'specified quantities' norms for packaging for 19 types of items including milk, tea, biscuits, edible oil, atta, soft drink and drinking water, baby food, pulses and cereals, cement bag, bread and detergents. So, now there is no government mandated specifications on quantities. As a result, manufacturers have full freedom to decide the quantities of all packaged items they sell in the market.

Officials said once packed items are made available in all quantities, consumers can choose what they require and they won't be compelled to buy bigger quantities. Similarly, manufacturers can also bring more options.

## Man gets life for killing youth who denied him cash for booze

Bhopal/Jabalpur: A sessions court in Madhya Pradesh's Jabalpur has sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing 18-year-old college student Brijmohan Yadav after he refused to give him money for booze.

According to the prosecution, the attack happened on September 8, 2017, when Yadav, who was tending to the counter of his brother-in-law's dairy, declined Anil Thakur's request for money. The refusal triggered verbal abuse and an attack with a brick. The assault took a more grievous turn when Thakur stabbed Yadav in the thighs with a knife. TNN

## One-year-old falls off tractor while playing in Maha, dies

A one-year-old boy who fell off a tractor while playing in Eklahara area of Nashik road on Saturday afternoon, succumbed to severe head injuries on Sunday. Police registered a case of accidental death. The parents of the deceased — Aniket Gautam — work at a brick kiln in Eklahara area, said cops.

Aniket was playing with few children on a tractor parked near the brick kiln. The tractor driver had left the key in the ignition. While playing, one of the children turned the key. As the tractor started and began shaking, the children jumped off. Aniket, however, lost balance and fell and sustained serious head and face injuries. TNN

### NAGAR NIGAM FIROZABAD (NNF) (UTTAR PRADESH, INDIA)

Letter No: 2912/NNF/2023-24/

Dt. 28.12.2023

#### Notice Inviting Tenders (NIT)

Municipal Commissioner (MC), Nagar Nigam Firozabad invites item Bids for the work mentioned below through e-Procurement in conformity with the terms and conditions of this advertisement and the detailed tender call notice in two Bid systems (Part-I: General & Technical Bid and Part-II: Financial Bid/Price Bid/BOQ) from intending bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria mentioned in this Notice and other qualifying requirements mentioned in this RFP. Bidders can participate in the bidding after registering them on E-tendering portal <http://etender.up.nic.in>. Bidder can download the RFP from <http://etender.up.nic.in> after paying the tender cost through online payment in the name of Nagar Nigam Firozabad, Bank Name-Punjab National Bank, Account No.-03822011009820, IFSC- PUNB0038210 Bidder will have to upload the scanned copy of transaction slip along with technical bid failing this, the Bid is liable to be rejected. The Bidder should deposit the Earnest Money online in above mentioned account number or through Bank Guarantee from a Nationalized Bank pledged in favor of Municipal Commissioner, Nagar Nigam Firozabad. The scanned copy of the transaction slip should be uploaded along with technical bid. The bidders should have necessary Portal enrollment (Digital Signature Certificate) under e-procurement process of Govt of Uttar Pradesh in required class/category. In case of any queries on this RFP, intending bidders may contact Chief Engineer, NAGAR NIGAM FIROZABAD.

S. No.	Name of the work	Cost of Project (Lakh)	Earnest Money Deposit (Rs.)	Tender fee with GST @ 18%	Completion/Implementation Period
1	Setting Up facilities for Green Antim Sanskar using gas with Operation and Maintenance of One year at Firozabad	101.40	7,07,000	13162	180 Days

#### Time schedule for Bidding:

S.No.	Description	Critical Dates
1.	Upload/Publish of RFP	30.12.2023
2.	Bid start Date of RFP	30.12.2023
3.	Pre-Bid Meeting/Time	04.01.2024 (11:00 AM)
4.	Bid Closing Date/Time of RFP	20.01.2024 (03:00 PM)
5.	Technical Bid Opening Date/Time	20.01.2024 (04:00 PM)
6.	Financial Bid Opening Date/Time	To be notified

- Other details can be seen on website <http://etender.up.nic.in> [for view, download and bidding]
- Subsequent corrigendum, if required, shall appear in these websites.
- Authority reserves the right to reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reasons.
- Contractor who wants to participate in bid must registered themselves on <http://etender.up.nic.in>
- For any other queries, please contact Executive Engineer, Nagar Nigam Firozabad. Also, for any further queries, the bidders are advised to send an email to: [nagarnigamfzd@gmail.com](mailto:nagarnigamfzd@gmail.com)
- Pre Bid Meeting will be scheduled at Nagar Nigam Firozabad.

Chief Engineer  
Nagar Nigam Firozabad

Municipal Commissioner  
Nagar Nigam Firozabad

## Woman SI among 10 Bihar cops injured in assault during bid to arrest bootlegger

Sasaram: A police team entering a Bihar village early Sunday to arrest an alleged bootlegger was pelted with stones and assaulted by a mob that included the suspect's family, leaving at least 10 cops — including a woman SI and a station house officer — injured, reports Alok Chamarla.

The anti-prohibition backlash in Kalyanpur village of Rohtas was the second such attack in a fortnight involving the liquor mafia in the district and the fifth in two months.

"A police team led by Kargahar SHO Vijay Kumar had been designated to arrest Kundan Paswan, based

on information that he was in his house since Saturday night. Family members of the accused argued with the cops before the women started showering stones from the roof," said Dileep Kumar, subdivisional officer of Sasaram.

A village mob then attacked the police with sticks and other weapons. Some of the assailants tried to snatch their service rifles before the raid party escaped. Four seriously injured police personnel were taken to the Sadar hospital after being administered first aid at the local primary health centre.

### DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES VIBHUTI KHAND, GOMTI NAGAR, LUCKNOW- 226 010 Phones: 0522-4918510, Fax 0522-4918506 Website : [www.drmlims.ac.in](http://www.drmlims.ac.in)

Ref. No. RMLIMS/MM(eq)/2023-24/3025 Date- 30.12.2023

#### INVITATION FOR PRE-BID OFFER (EXPRESSION OF INTEREST) FOR Gamma Knife Machine on the Basis of PPP Model

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow invites suggestions from Manufacturers / Vendors / Authorized distributors / Dealers / Agents for the technical specification and General Terms & Conditions of Gamma Knife Machine on the basis of Public Private Partnership (PPP Model) in the Institute. Shortly we will holding a face to face meeting of the vendors/interested parties with the Dr. RMLIMS, administrative & Technical Team soon. We request to participate in it. The firms are also requested to make presentation before the Committee.

The Manufacturers/Vendors/Authorized distributors/Dealers/Agents are requested to send the suggestion with Product Brochure, Specification & General Terms & Conditions of related Gamma Knife Machine till date 15.01.2024 up to 4-00 PM in the JDMM Camp Room No-10, Administrative Block, Ground Floor of the Institute through speed post/by hand/courier etc. in the hard copy.

Director

Monday | January 1, 2024

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a) Pilfer b) Aggregator c) Unfettered d) Probity
- 3) Gourmandize**  
a) Condign b) Devour c) Behoove d) Ululate
- 4) Eschew**  
a) Relinquish b) Anodyne c) Confabulate d) Remuneration
- 5) Importunate**  
a) Weasel b) Reckless c) Invererate d) Exigent
- 6) Indefatigable**  
a) Unflagging b) Lackadaisical c) Apathetic d) Elude

**Answer key for the last week's quiz:** 1. c, 2. d, 3. b, 4. a, 5. c, 6. a, 7. b, 8. c

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## Delhi private schools allocate EWS seats based on general admissions

c-Aditya.Wadhawan@timesgroup.com

In the last few years, Delhi private schools have noticed a decline in enrolment of students from EWS category, which the schools claim is because of reduced admissions in the general category. The school admissions were hit due to Covid, and its impact continues. The Directorate of Education (DoE), Delhi Government, recently released a data in the Delhi legislative assembly which revealed that there were around 45,859 seats for the EWS category against which 33,553 students got admissions in 2018-19. In 2023-24, the numbers fell to 35,186 seats against which 28,467 students were admitted. Kulbhushan Sharma, national president, National Independent Schools Alliance (NISA), says, "In Delhi, two categories of private schools existed for the past few years. The first category of schools is built on land allotted by DDA, whereas the rest are the budget private schools that are in the unauthorised and semi-rural colonies of Delhi. Enrolling EWS students is mandatory for both categories of schools." If some schools do not follow the RTE provision, DoE derecognises them. In the last two years, around three private schools were taken over by the government due to non-compliance, says a source from DoE.

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# Achieved 95% conviction rate, arrested 625 accused in '23: NIA

## Attached 240 Assets, Including 156 Bank A/Cs, Worth ₹56cr

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As many as 43 suspects were identified in cases related to vandalism on Indian high commissions in UK, US and Canada, thanks to the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) efforts at crowd-sourcing of information. Also, as part of its stepped up investigations into these cases in recent months, the agency carried out more than 50 raids and searches and examined 80 people in India for alleged links to the conspiracy behind the attacks.

Sharing this update as part of an year-end review, the NIA said it has scored an overall conviction rate of 94.7%, arrested 625 accused and ensured the attachment of 240 assets, including 156 bank accounts, all worth around Rs 56 crore, in 2023 as part of an intensified and focused fight against terrorists, gangsters, drug smugglers, human traffickers and other criminals working against national interests.

The NIA said its scaled-up operations across India in 2023 saw a 28% rise in arrests from 490 in 2022 to 625 this year. While 65 accused were



The agency carried out more than 50 raids and searches and examined 80 people in India for alleged links to the conspiracy behind the attacks on Indian high commissions in UK, US and Canada

arrested this year in IS cases, 114 were arrested for jihadi terror cases, 45 in human trafficking cases, 28 for terrorist and organised criminal activity and 76 in Left-wing Extremism-related (LWE) cases.

The agency registered 68 cases in 2023, including 18 related to jihadi terror across multiple states, three related to J&K, 12 related to LWE, seven involving terrorist and organised crimes in Punjab, five cases concerning the north-east region and two related to fake Indian currency notes.

The number of people chargesheeted and convicted in NIA cases stood at 513 and

74 respectively, as against 459 and 79 in 2022. The NIA managed to track down and arrest 47 accused in 2023, 14 more than last year. Also, arrests were made upon deportation and extradition—those in the net include Amritpal Singh alias Ammy, Amrik Singh, Manpreet Singh alias Peeta and Mandeep Singh deported from the Philippines. Vikram Brar was arrested upon deportation from the UAE.

The number of searches and raids by the agency also recorded a significant increase, going up from 957 in 2022 to 1,040 in 2023.

NIA attached properties

and assets worth Rs 56 crore, up from Rs 10.5 crore in 2022. The 12 properties, worth Rs 1.5 crore, attached in 2023 belonged to six listed 'individual terrorists'.

Dismantling of the terrorist-gangster nexus by the NIA saw the registration of two cases, chargesheeting of 55 people, 253 raids, 27 arrests and attachment of 18 properties in 2023.

Crackdown on cadres and sympathisers of the banned CPI (Maoist) and People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) brought about the arrest of Dinesh Gope, supremo of PLFI that is a splinter group of CPI (Maoist), in May.

Six individuals, Mohammed Amin Khubaiab, Arbaz Ahmad Mir, Dr Asif Marqabool Dar, Arshdeep Singh Gill, Harwinder Singh Sandhu and Lakhbir Singh Landu, were designated as 'individual terrorists' in 2023, as proposed by the NIA. Also, four terrorist organisations—The Resistance Force (TRF), People's Anti-Fascists Front (PAFF), Jammu & Kashmir Ghaznavi Force (JKGF) and Khalistan Tiger Force (KTF)—were banned, again on the recommendation of the NIA.

# Fast-shrinking Chor Bazaar fights to keep edge in e-age

Mohammed.Wajihuddin  
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Mumbai: Almost everything that Haji Ebrahim Record Shop stocks has lost relevance. Or it is just worth a decorative piece in homes where "antiques" are still valued. Be it a gramophone, an old typewriter, rotary dial telephones or long-playing (LP) records, they all are past their prime.

And it is essentially vintage quality of the merchandise available at Chor Bazaar—spanning a few dusty labyrinthine streets near Bendi Bazaar in South Mumbai—that has earned the neighbourhood its fame. However, some famous streets at Chor Bazaar are complete a misnomer. Like Mutton Street and Chinna Butcher Street. Though originally home to many qasais (butchers), there is no mutton shop or slaughterhouse here.

## TIMES Special

"They still have a community hall there," says Haji Hasan Rahimo (74), pointing to a fading signboard of Bombay Bakar Qasab Jamaat Khana.

If Mutton Street was once the heart of Chor Bazaar, only half of it remains today, the other half getting gobbled up in the Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT), the massive redevelopment project of Bendi Bazaar. A brainchild of the leader of the Dawoodi Bohras, the late Syedna Mohammed Burhanuddin, to decongest Bendi Bazaar and give cleaner, bigger and better homes to the residents, SBUT is transforming the locality.

Though only half of Mutton Street, part of Chor Bazaar, has gone into redevelopment, a rumour, say many shop owners, has been spread that Chor Bazaar is dead. "Many customers wrongly believe there is no Chor Bazaar left. Chor Bazaar is here to stay," says Mohammed Salim who inherited Haji Ebrahim Record Shop from his uncle in the 1960s.

Once, recalls Salim, legendary musicians such as OP Nayyar, C Ramchandra and Sajjad Hussain visited Chor Bazaar, including his shop, looking for old music records. "Today, many hunt and shop for rare records and record players online," says Salim. But does the Chor Bazaar have a future? "It will survive as long as people have a taste

## 'ICONIC MKT FAR FROM DEAD, WILL SURVIVE'

### THE LEGENDARY CHOR BAZAAR

It spans a few labyrinthine streets near Bendi Bazaar, including Mutton St

### WHAT IT IS KNOWN FOR

Old Victorian, antique furniture and items, photos and old film posters are sold here



### HOW IT GOT ITS NAME

It's said to have come into existence some 150 years ago in the 19th century

**Theory 1** | A section of the area was occupied by shops where old cars and bikes were scrapped, causing a lot of noise. This had led many to call it 'Shor (Noise) Bazaar'. The British are said to have distorted the name to 'Chor (Thieves) Bazaar', said Urdu journalist-poet Farhan Hanif

**Theory 2** | There was a time when vehicles stolen anywhere in the city were sold and scrapped here, which led to birth of the name 'Chor Bazaar'



### ITS CURRENT STATUS

Half of Mutton Street at Chor Bazaar has gone in for Bendi Bazaar redevelopment, a project by Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT)

Footfall has also decreased because many buy vintage pieces online these days



Mohammed Mansoori, who owns a couple of shops in the bazaar, said in the 1970s it boasted around 150 shops, of which some 90 are left

Chor Bazaar has an iconic status. Many foreigners visit it too. It has some good shops for old and antique furniture. I remember occasions when foreign friends of the late Murlidhar Deoraj wanted to see Chor Bazaar and I had organised the visit. This bustling market will never die  
Amin Patel | LOCAL MLA

## Daily Covid tally rises to 841, highest since May 18 last year

India reported 4,652 fresh Covid cases during the week ending Saturday (December 24-30) as against 3,818 in the previous seven days, reports Amit Bhattacharya. There were 29 deaths from the virus in the week, up from 17. On Saturday (numbers reported Sunday), the daily tally rose to 841, highest since May 18 this year, along with three fatalities.

Significantly, Kerala logged 2,282 fresh cases during the week, a 24% drop from the previous week when the tally was 3,018 — indicating that the surge may have already peaked, after a surge lasting only around four weeks or so. The state accounted for less than 50% of all cases recorded in the country where last week the state's share was nearly 80%.

While cases are dipping in Kerala, they are rising in several other states, particularly Karnataka and Maharashtra — the only states apart from Kerala where the daily count of cases has topped 100. Karnataka reported 922 fresh infections in the week, up three-fold from 309 in the previous seven days. Similarly, Maharashtra cases rose from 103 in the previous week to 620.

Overall, the number of states/UTs that reported Covid cases in the past week stood at 20, more than double the number in December 15, when around eight-nine states were logging fresh infections. This indicates that the new Omicron subvariant, JN.1, was spreading across the country.

## Rape FIR against pharma firm CMD after HC order

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: The Ahmedabad police on Sunday booked the CMD of a major pharmaceutical company in the state for rape following Gujarat HC's order on allegations levelled by a Bulgarian woman.

ACP H M Kansagra said, "Complying with the court order, we filed a complaint on Sunday against Cadila Pharmaceuticals CMD Rajiv Modi under IPC sections 376 (rape), 354 (molestation), and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoking breach of peace)."

The investigating officer, inspector RH Solanki of the Sola police station, said the cops will take the statement of the complainant and the witnesses after which they will arrest the accused. "There is an alleged involvement of another company staffer, Johnson Mathew, who had abetted the crime according to the complainant," Solanki said.

An email query sent by TOI to Rajiv Modi went unanswered. Attempts to reach him on phone for comments on the matter did not elicit any response till the time of going to press.

On December 22, the HC had ordered an investigation into the allegation of rape levelled against Modi. The HC also

directed that the probe be supervised by a senior IPS officer nominated by the deputy inspector general of police (law and order).

The HC acted while quashing a magisterial court's order that rejected the 27-year-old woman's application for an FIR and directed the magistrate to order an investigation under Section 156(3) of the CrPC.

The HC judge observed irregularities in the magisterial court's process, including the court's rejection of the complaint by shifting the burden of proof on the survivor instead of asking police to in-

### FEB 2023 CASE

vestigate. This is despite the woman making allegations that were cognizable.

Similarly, police officials — an assistant commissioner of police and two police inspectors — were called out by the high court for their inaction. The woman has accused an official of the Mahila police station and the inspectors of the Sola police station — JB Agrawat and RH Solanki — of inaction.

The woman had joined the company as a flight attendant in November 2022 and was later made to work as a personal assistant to the CMD. She accused him of sexual harassment and rape in February 2023.

## Rahul ordinary MP, should not be highlighted much: Diggy bro

Bhopal: Former Congress MP Lakshman Singh has said Rahul Gandhi is an ordinary party worker and parliamentarian and he should not be highlighted so much.

Lakshman, the younger brother of Congress veteran Digvijaya Singh, was speaking to reporters at the Congress office in MP's Guna city on Saturday. When reporters claimed Rahul's face is shown less on TV when he makes a statement in the Lok Sabha, Lakshman said, "Rahul is an MP, he is not the (party) president and is a Congress worker. Apart from this, Rahul is nothing." "You people should not highlight Rahul so much and neither should we," Lakshman said.

## Maran likens BJP IT cell to 'jobless barber'

Chennai: DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran on Sunday compared BJP's IT wing to a "jobless barber", alleging that members of the IT cell spread old videos as they have nothing useful to do.

In his first reaction after a video of his four-year-old speech about people in Hindi-speaking states seeking jobs in Tamil Nadu kicked up a fresh controversy, Maran quoted a Tamil proverb to slam BJP. TNN

## '91 batch IAS officer, Sudhansh Pant named Raj chief secy

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Sudhansh Pant, an IAS officer of the 1991 batch, was appointed chief secretary of Rajasthan on Sunday, barely hours after he was suddenly repatriated to his home cadre. This came a day after 1984 batch IAS officer D S Mishra got a six-month extension as Uttar Pradesh chief secretary.

There is speculation over the Centre sending another top IAS officer from Delhi to MP to become the new chief

### After 25 yrs, WB gets a woman home secy

West Bengal on Sunday got a woman as its home secretary after a gap of 25 years, reports Debashish Konar. Nandini Chakravorty was appointed as the new home secretary, after BP Gopalika, the incumbent, formally took charge as the state chief secretary. HK Dwivedi, incumbent chief secretary who completed his tenure on Sunday, was appointed as CM Mamata Banerjee's chief adviser (finance) for a period of 3 years.

secretary. Currently, Veera Rana, a 1998 batch IAS officer, is holding additional charge of chief secretary in the state where BJP came back to office with more seats in the recent-

stumped many, considering he was seventh in the order of seniority among IAS officers of the Rajasthan cadre.

For Pant, it is the third successive appointment in a year. He was brought to the Centre in October 2022 as OSD in the shipping ministry and was later made secretary. Six months later, he was shifted to the health ministry as secretary.

Senior bureaucrats said they were expecting a reshuffle at the secretary level in the near future.

## Whatever we do, our 1st criterion should be 'what will India get from it': PM

Continued from Page 1

There is excitement and enthusiasm in the entire country in connection with the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. People are expressing their feelings in a multitude of ways. You must have noticed that during the last few days, many new songs and new bhajans have been composed on Shri Ram and Ayodhya. Many people are also writing new poems. There are many experienced artists in it and new emerging young artists have also composed heart-warming bhajans," PM Modi said, a day after launching various development projects, including the newly-built airport and a renovated railway station.

The PM is set to lead the consecration ceremony at the Lord Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

Modi said he had shared some songs and bhajans on his social media handles and it seemed the art world was becoming a participant in this historic moment in its unique style. "One thing comes to my mind... could we all share all such creations with a common hash-

tag?" he asked and urged people to share creations on social media with the hashtag Shri Ram Bhajan (#ShriRamBhajan).

"This compilation will turn into a flow of emotions and devotion, in which everyone will be immersively imbued with the ethos of Ram," he said.

Modi emphasised on hard work and said, "Whatever work we do, whatever decision we make, our first criterion should be... what will the country get from it, what benefit will it bring to the country." Stating that every corner of India was brimming with self-confidence, the PM cited the record business on Diwali, which proved that every Indian was giving importance to 'Vocal For Local'.

He said the country was imbued with the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat', and asserted that this momentum had to be maintained in 2024.

During the broadcast, Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru, Indian women's cricket captain Harmanpreet Kaur, chess legend Vishwanathan Anand and actor Akshay Kumar shared their fitness tips.



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## If The Bulls Have It, Nifty May Repeat Its 20% Rally This Year

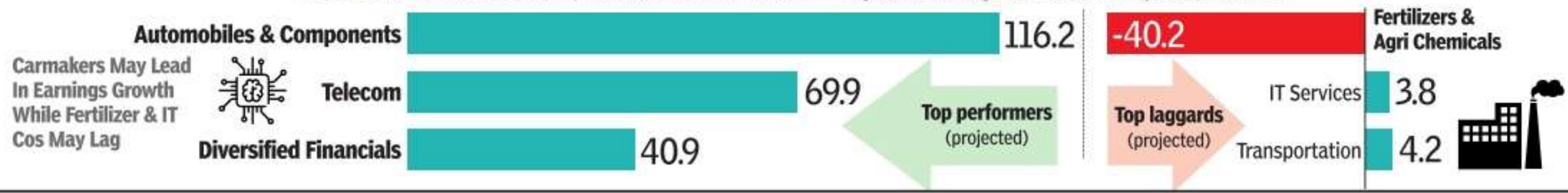
Will D-Street's leading benchmarks continue to rise in 2024 to a record-extending ninth year? That's the top-of-the-mind query for investors in the new year. Analysts at Kotak Securities believe there could be a marginal rise in the Nifty this year. But if Bulls are again in-charge like they were in 2023, Nifty could rally nearly 20%. And if bears regain their hold of the street, we could see a slide in double digits

Source: Kotak Institutional Equities estimates

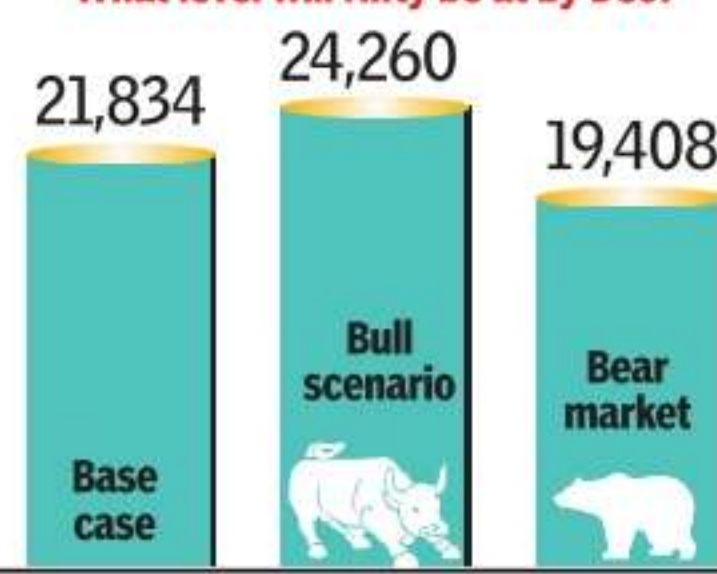
# TIMES BUSINESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI | MONDAY, JANUARY 1, 2024

Expected Earning Per Share For Nifty Stocks In 2024



What level will Nifty be at by Dec?



## Focus on innovative deposits for low-cost funds: FM to PSBs

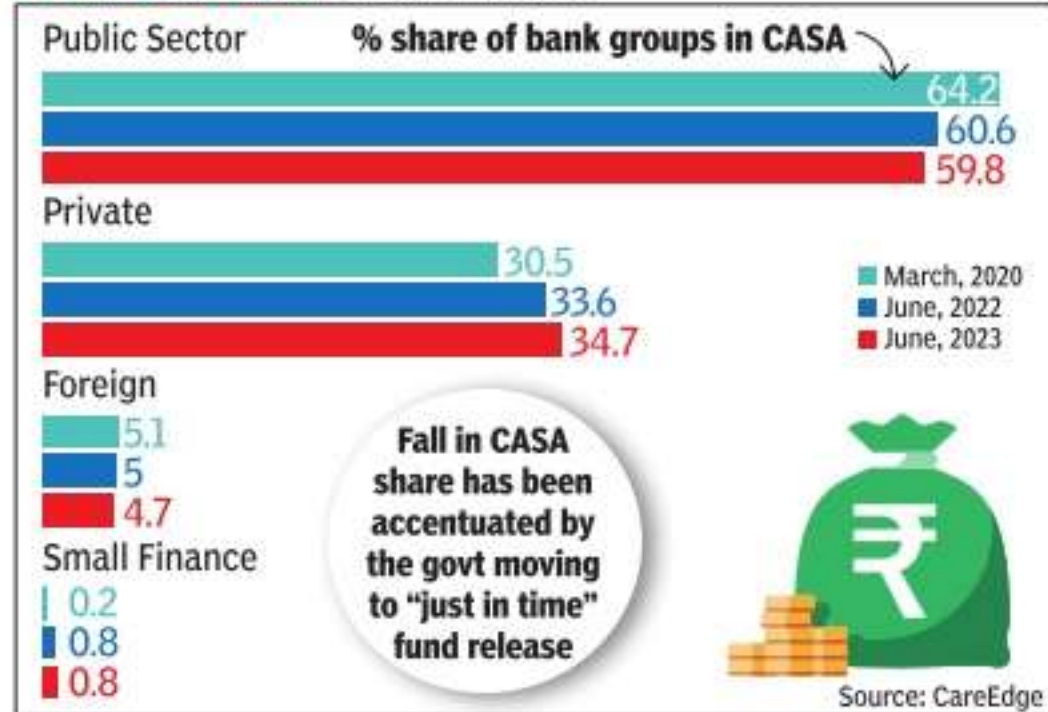
### CASA Deposits' Share Under Pressure As Customers Eye FDs

Sidhartha@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: With public sector banks losing share of current and savings account business, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has asked state-run bank chiefs to focus on innovative deposit instruments so that they can raise lower-cost resources to meet their financing requirements.

The minister once again flagged the issue at a meeting with public sector bank chiefs on Saturday with sources saying that she wanted the lenders to focus on their "core activity". In recent months, the share of CASA in bank deposits has come under pressure as depositors have been parking funds in fixed deposits, which are offering high returns. Some of the new generation private banks, for instance, are offering over 9% on certain tenures of term deposits.

#### CHANGING DYNAMICS



Public Sector

Private

Foreign

In recent years, public sector banks have also lost out on salary accounts of large companies to their private sector rivals. The fall in the share of CASA has been accentuated by the government moving to "just in time" fund release, with the state-run players looking to counter this by chasing current account balances

of medium-sized businesses.

For private sector lenders, such as HDFC Bank, tie-ups with exchanges and other sources have helped mobilise a strong base of low-cost deposits. According to CARE Ratings data, the share of CASA in the deposit base of private banks was estimated at over 43% at the end of the June quarter, compared with 41% for the state-run players. The public sector players have, however, lost nearly 4.5% share of CASA business, which has been taken over by private lenders.

Going by the current trends, banks will be chasing fixed deposits in the fourth quarter as they raise resources to fund the lending requirements. Public sector players such as SBI and Bank of Baroda have opted for an increase in FD rates and others are expected to follow suit. Typically, deposit rates peak in the fourth quarter.

## Niti Aayog's 1st VC Panagariya to head 16th Finance Commission

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Columbia University professor and the first vice chairman of Niti Aayog Arvind Panagariya has been appointed the chairman of the 16th Finance Commission. The government is, however, yet to name the other members of the panel, which has an open mandate unlike finance commissions in recent years, where the Centre provided a large set of terms of reference.

For many, Panagariya's appointment came as a surprise since the last four commissions were headed by those who had long stints either in the finance ministry or RBI. Barring the two-and-a-half years that he spent at Niti Aayog, the former Asian Development Bank chief economist has focused on academics. He is currently the Jagdish Bhagwati professor of

#### KNOWN TO SPEAK HIS MIND

Barring two-and-a-half years at Niti Aayog, the former Asian Development Bank chief economist Arvind Panagariya has focused on academics. He is currently the Jagdish Bhagwati professor of Indian political economy & professor of economics and director of Raj Center on Indian Economic Policies. At Niti Aayog,

he had nudged states to push reforms and pursue initiatives to make life easier for businesses. He was at the helm when the aspirational districts programme was launched. The economist was seen to be a major backer of disinvestment, having recommended the privatisation of Air India and others

Indian political economy & professor of economics and director of Raj Center on Indian Economic Policies.

The 16th Finance Commission, which has less than two years to finalise its recommendations for five years, starting April 2025, will have the flexibility to decide the areas that it intends to focus on apart from the Constitutionally-mandated task of devising the formula to divide the tax revenue between the Centre and the states along with the grants in aid from the Consolidated Fund of India. Besides, it has to recommend on transfer of resources to panchayats and municipal bodies and ways to finance disaster management. This time, the government

During his stint in Niti Aayog, he had nudged states to push reforms and pursue initiatives to make life easier for businesses, things that were part of the mandate for the 15th Finance Commission. Typically, finance commissions have been a mix of economists and former civil servants.

he has also refrained from providing a base year for the Commission, which uses population as a key parameter for working out the devolution formula. Panagariya, who is bullish on the prospects of the Indian economy in the coming years, is known to speak his mind and has often been critical of the government's trade policy and high tariffs. The new assignment will force him to return to India as finance commissions hold extensive consultations with the states and central government agencies before finalising their recommendations.

During his stint in Niti Aayog, he had nudged states to push reforms and pursue initiatives to make life easier for businesses, things that were part of the mandate for the 15th Finance Commission. Typically, finance commissions have been a mix of economists and former civil servants.

## Most IPOs in '23 gain more than sensex

Mumbai: In a year when key equity benchmarks scaled new highs and rallied nearly 20% making investors richer by about Rs 85 lakh crore, 55 of the 59 issues gave IPO investors handsome returns of 45% on average. In fact, 2023 turned out to be an outlier for primary market investors when 59 companies hit the street, raising Rs 54,000 crore, and returned over 45% more than the issue prices on average, according to exchange data.

This means that more than two-thirds of companies outperformed benchmark indices which rallied close to 20% in the year. The average listing gain for all the 59 IPOs is 26.3% and their average gain as of December 29 is 45%. AGENCIES

## 'Managed to rein in inflation without losing growth focus'

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New Delhi: RBI governor Shaktikanta Das has said that the central bank managed to moderate inflation without compromising on its growth focus. In his new year message to the central bank's staff, Das said that the RBI has navigated multiple challenges faced by the economy and exhorted the staff to improve the quality and efficacy of service delivery.

While pointing to the challenges posed by macroeconomic and geo-political shocks, the governor also highlighted the threat of climate change. "As Team RBI, we have been able to effectively navigate through the multiple challenges faced by us. We continued our journey with a proactive, pragmatic and prudent approach," Das said in his year-end message to RBI staff.

"On the monetary policy front, we have managed to moderate inflation, without losing focus on growth. Our actions were timely and decisive. We have also scaled new heights in maintaining macroeconomic and financial stability. Our regulatory and supervisory policies continued to be fine-tuned to ensure a robust financial system," the governor wrote in a two-page note.

Since May 2022, the monetary policy committee has raised key policy rates by 2.5 percentage points and, factoring in the impact of its decision, decided to pause amid moderating inflation. While it is still closely monitoring the developments, RBI is widely expected to start reducing rates later in 2024.

While RBI is seen to be done with its rate hikes, the tighter liquidity conditions have resulted in some banks hiking their deposit rates.

The governor's comments come two days after RBI's financial stability report ratified the strength of the country's macroeconomic fundamentals.

## PSU cos' mkt cap jumps 45% to ₹51L cr in '23

### Govt Top Gainer From Stock Surge | Most-Valued State-Owned Co SBI Lags

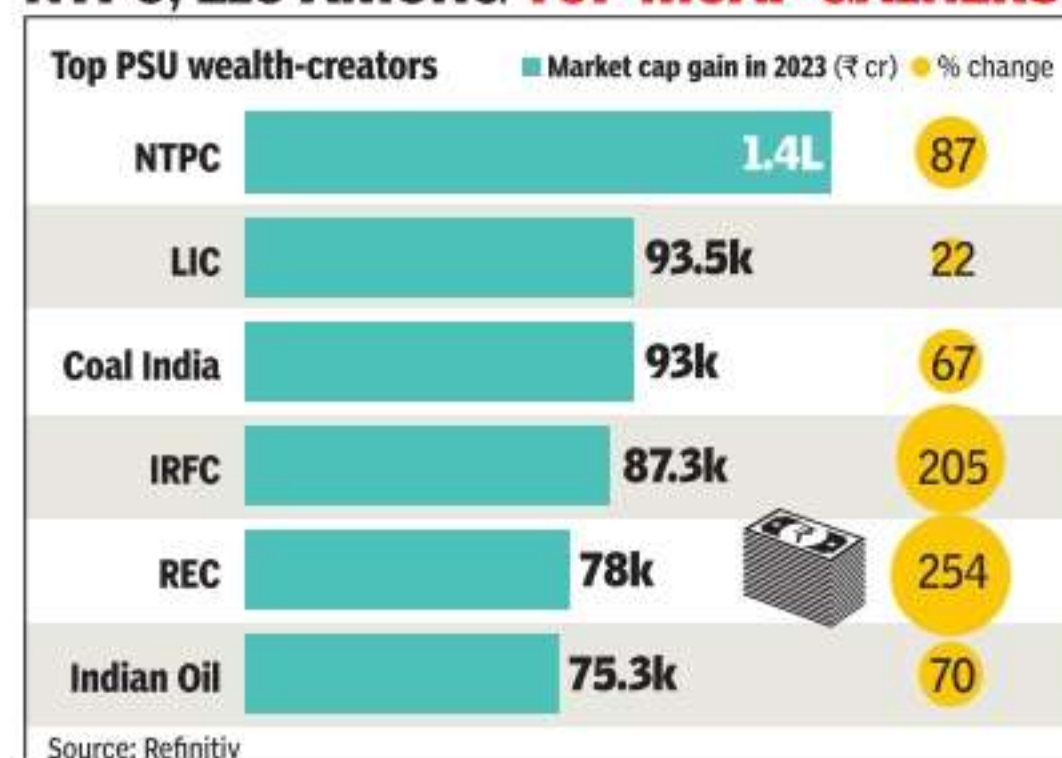
Partha.Sinha@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: Investor wealth, as measured by BSE market capitalisation, surged by about Rs 85 lakh crore in 2023, of which Rs 16 lakh crore — or nearly a fifth of the overall gain — came from state-owned companies.

The combined market of 65 odd public sector undertakings jumped by 45% in 2023 in line with the upsurge in the broader market. The market value of these PSUs, where the President (on behalf of the government) is either the majority owner or owns a substantial stake, increased by Rs 15.8 lakh crore to Rs 50.5 lakh crore, data from Refinitiv showed.

In comparison, among large private sector business houses, Aditya Birla Group's market

#### NTPC, LIC AMONG TOP MCAP GAINERS



ket value increased by 38%, Tata Group's by nearly 32%, Bajaj Group's 23%, Reliance Industries' by a marginal 1.6%, while

Adani Group, thanks to the Hindenburg Research report, saw 29% wealth erosion. The PSUs operate in a diverse set of sectors that include energy, insurance, power, railways, banks, ship-building and ports.

In 2023, the biggest addition to the PSU market cap was by NTPC. It made its shareholders richer by Rs 1.4 lakh crore with its current market value stands at nearly Rs 3.1 lakh crore. The power sector giant was followed by LIC that added Rs 93,547 crore to its market value which is at Rs 5.3 lakh crore.

Coal India stood third as India depends on coal to fire its power plants and several other industries amid a global move towards cleaner sources of energy. The 67% jump in Coal India's stock price also translated to a Rs 93,026-crore addition to its market value to Rs 2.3 lakh crore now, the data showed.

## Budget: Finmin seeks expenditure proposals from other ministries

New Delhi: The finance ministry has sought expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of supplementary demands for grants from various ministries and departments ahead of the Budget session likely to commence in the last week of January.

This would be the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections and the government would seek expenditure approvals of Parliament for four months till July 2024 through a vote on account.

The second batch of supplementary demands for grants for 2023-24 is proposed to be placed before Parliament in the ensuing Budget session, the finance ministry said in an office memorandum. The cases that would be eligible to be incorporated under such demands include those where advances from the contingency fund have been granted.

Besides, payments against court decrees would be included as well as cases where the finance ministry has specifically advised moving the supplementary demand in the winter session, it said. AGENCIES

## AI Express seeks final NCLT nod for AIX merger

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New Delhi: Tata Group is on track to consolidate its four airlines in the New Year. Air India Express has filed the 'second motion' for final hearing in NCLT for merging AIX Connect (erstwhile AirAsia India) into it. The group expects the nod by March and after approval, the two airlines will operate on a single air operator certificate or licence.

The timing of the other big merger — Vistara into Air India — will depend on the latter "reaching an appropriate level". AI MD & CEO Campbell Wilson had told TOI last September. While there's no formal word on that merger's timing, people in the know expect that too in 2024.

AI Express will focus more on thinner markets and tier II & III cities while AI will — apart from medium to ultra-



EXPECTED BY MARCH

long haul — be on routes with a larger share of premium traffic. AI Express will also provide the feed to AI hubs in Delhi and Mumbai to fill up the latter's growing number of wide-bodies flying across the world.

AI Express CEO Aloke Singh said: "We have 62 aircraft as of now (the combined fleet of the two LCCs). In the next 12 months, we will induct 50 new Boeing 737 Max. After phasing out some planes, AI Express will have about 98 aircraft in its fleet by December." Tata's record order for 470 aircraft placed last February includes 190 B737 Max for its LCC.

"While new domestic and international sectors will be added, we will first focus on consolidating and deepening our network. For instance, when we started flying to Surat, we did so from Delhi. Then quickly, we had direct flights from there to Bengaluru, Kolkata, Sharjah and Dubai. Ditto with Ayodhya. After Delhi, we announced Bengaluru and Kolkata flights to the holy city."

## EVs to fuel car mkt growth in New Year

### New Launches, Increase In Adoption Due To Running-Cost Benefits May Be Key Drivers

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New Delhi: The broader car market may be headed for a breather in the New Year, but electric vehicles will fuel industry growth — driven by new launches and rising adoption, top executives at companies such as Tata Motors, MG Motor, Mercedes-Benz, and Kia have said.

Albeit growing rapidly in electric cars, and against around 42,000 greens that we re-tailed in 2022, the sales this year are expected at 65,000-70,000 units, registering a growth between 60% and 70%," Chandra said, adding that the company also plans to introduce vehicles with higher range of 600km on a single charge.

Gaurav Gupta, deputy MD at MG Motor India, said EVs are likely to see a 100% growth in the new year. "They are on their way up, as you have new cars coming into the market, the charging ecosystem is being developed, and consumers are realising the running-cost benefits of driving greens."

Mercedes-Benz has been assembling some of its electric models in India, including a variant of EQS. More models will follow, says company MD Santosh Iyer. "Our EV offensive continues in 2024 with multiple ground-up EV launches planned across segments from our global portfolio," Iyer said.

Tae-Jin Park, MD & CEO of Kia in India (that imports EV6 electric), said the company is now gearing up towards local production of greens. "We will begin production of electric models in India, Park said, adding that the EV passenger vehicles market is likely to hit 10 lakh units by 2030, on total industry scale (including petrol/diesel/hybrid versions) of 50 lakh cars.

#### RAMPING UP ELECTRIC PLAY

EV sales in India nearly doubled to over 90,000 units this year from around 48,000 units in 2022. Tata Motors will drive in three new greens in 2024 — Punch mini SUV, Harrier premium off-roader, and Curvv coupe.

Mercedes-Benz has been assembling some of its electric models in India, including a variant of EQS. More models will follow, says company MD Santosh Iyer. "Our EV offensive continues in 2024 with multiple ground-up EV launches planned across segments from our global portfolio," Iyer said.

EV adoption in India is more of a marathon and not a sprint — SANTOSH IYER | MERCEDES-BENZ MD

## Hospitals see 15x surge in PE-VC funds in 4 yrs

### Investors Bet On Growing Demand After Covid

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New Delhi: Investor interest in hospitals peaked this year with investments by private equity (PE) and venture capital (VC) firms rising by over 15 times to cross Rs 30,000 crore over a 4-year period from Rs 1,921 crore in pre-Covid 2019. This comes even as there is a slowdown in overall funding globally, with PE and VC investments declining 38% in India in 2023, the latest data from research firm Venture Intelligence showed.

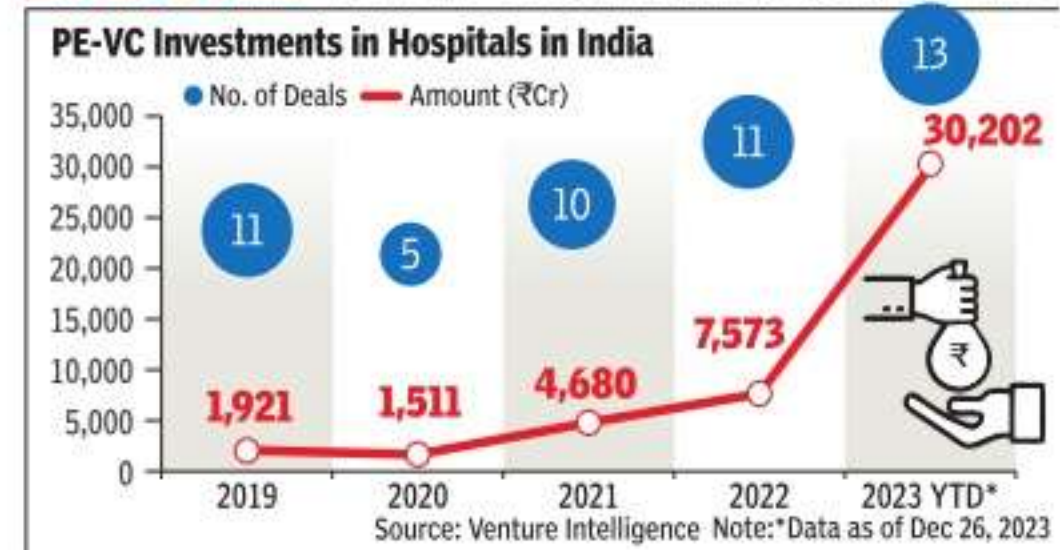
The hospital sector was red hot this year, with large hospital chains such as Manipal and Max attracting bulge-bracket investment firms as demand for private healthcare surged post the pandemic. Other growth drivers include a growing ageing population, an increase in lifestyle ailments and rising incomes, which whetted investor appetite with PE firms snapping up established hospital groups and even single specialty hospitals.

"Covid 19 exposed the massive demand-supply gap in India's healthcare delivery ecosystem and scarcity in motion on all fronts. All formats of healthcare delivery chains, whether multi-speci-

ality, single specialty, day care specialties, have shown tremendous appetite to grow and scale either through the organic or consolidation route. These potential industry tailwinds, growth of health

The year witnessed 13 deals, marked by the \$2.4-billion Manipal-Temasek mega deal, with Singapore's sovereign wealth fund increasing its stake in Manipal Hospitals to 59% from 18%. Another

#### 2023 JUMP DRIVEN BY 2 MAJOR DEALS



insurance as a payor and the evolution of tier 2 cities as future growth markets have created a strong private equity interest in the sector which has also been matched by the strong demand for hospital stocks in public markets. As one of the fastest growing sectors in one of the fastest growing economies of the globe, we will continue to see phenomenal interest by private equity players in India's healthcare ecosystem," Vishal Bali, executive chairman of PE fund, Asia Healthcare Holdings, told TOI.

her big investment was Rs 5,775 crore by Blackstone in Care Hospitals. "Merger and acquisitions (M&As) is the hottest segment of healthcare today. Finally, global PE firms are making a difference by investing and acquiring large network hospitals. A homogeneous network is of great attraction, and those of size and scale are attracting a premium. Hence, potential values have increased significantly," Kannan Ramesh, senior partner Somerset Indus Healthcare fund, said.





## A thought for today

Every time you tear a leaf off a calendar, you present a new place for new ideas and progress

CHARLES KETTERING

## Five Wishes For India

A to-do list for our politicians, policymakers

India steps into 2024 with many positives. Of course, there are negatives. Country of this size and complexity, that's inevitable. The good news is that this year, India's economy may again be better placed than its peers. IMF's latest forecast for 2024 makes India the fastest growing major economy.

But let's be careful. Hence our to-do list for governments, Union and states.

**Track oil, food** | Oil price has defied conventional wisdom. A major conflict broke out in West Asia in October, but the monthly average oil price trended downward thereafter. At the current level of \$80, oil is not the headache it could have been. But that might not persist. What's certain is that for India, food inflation will be the biggest source of domestic uncertainty this year. Keeping it under check is important to keep the economy moving at around the same speed.

**Do reforms** | Till general elections, expect no major policy initiatives, bar some pre-poll budget goodies. But if, as predicted, Modi comes back for a third time, he should use his enormous political capital to initiate reforms. If India is to grow at 7%-plus for the next 10 years, it needs a few systemic changes now. Modi's third term is the perfect launch pad.

**Make Houses relevant** | The winter session of Parliament showed how dysfunctional the legislature has become. Important changes to criminal justice laws were made with a big part of the opposition missing. Intra-party debates in Parliament when laws are made provide the judiciary a clue on their interpretation. When laws are made without adequate debate, the interpretation later is dicey. It adds to delays and confusion. GOI has to take the lead here.

**Human capital** | It's people who determine how sophisticated a society is. India is in urgent need of a big upgrade to reach its potential. Even smart laws will not deliver satisfactory results if they are worked by under-equipped people. Recently, two members of NCLAT were pulled up by the Supreme Court for contempt. It should, therefore, be no surprise that bankruptcy cases rarely stick to their timelines despite a good law.

**Listen to mountains** | There have been a series of calamities in the Himalayas, where senseless human activities played a role. It's a warning that environmental risks cannot be brushed away. In 2024, India needs to move away from false binaries on development and environment.

Hoping some of this gets done, we wish India a Happy New Year.

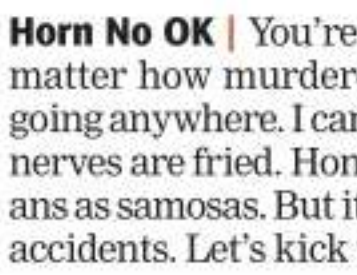


## 10 Things We Would Like To See This Year

Quieter roads, less cricket, real food...stuff that matters but doesn't often make news



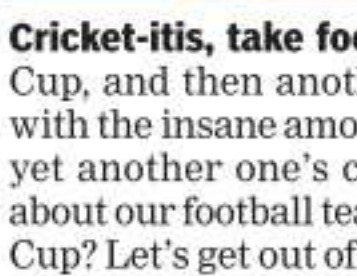
**Airfares, fly lower** | Everytime we checked out a cool holiday destination in 2023, we found airfares hot and hotter. Right now they are up 30-40% from December 2022. It's been so bad we haven't even been able to use up all our PLs. Blaming foreign wars and fewer local airlines is no comfort. We really, really wish the fares will come down, so we can see some new towns.



**Horn No OK** | You're sitting in the same traffic as me. No matter how murderously you honk, you know I am not going anywhere. I cannot. But yeah, now my eardrums and nerves are fried. Honking is as much of a passion for Indians as samosas. But it's a bigger health threat. It can trigger accidents. Let's kick this road ragey habit.



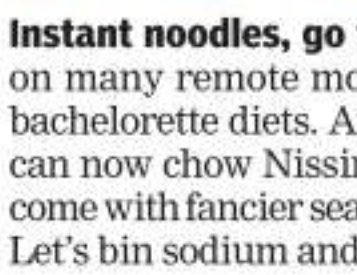
**WhatsApp groups, take rest** | Kids to grannies, everyone is chained to too many WhatsApp groups, endlessly scrolling, posting, forwarding, always 'on'. We say rest The Thumb. It's about how much misinformation WhatsApp University spreads. Also, that daily Good Morning rose from your mausi and hazaar chaddi buddis is utterly useless. Declutter today.



**Cricket-itis, take footy meds** | We saw a cricket World Cup, and then another in 2023. It's hard to keep track with the insane amount of cricket, but we lost both. Now yet another one's coming up. This is too much. How about our football team qualifying for the Fifa 2026 World Cup? Let's get out of the rut of being a one-sport nation.



**Pannun on OTT trial** | There were some conversations about the man during the farmers' protests. But between them Kanada and Amrika have now got us all being total argumentative Indians over the Pannun kaand. It's ripe for a racy/risky take on OTT. That's where we really like to see true crime. The real deal on reel. OTT'll give you the gist, and plenty grist.



**Instant noodles, go to dustbin** | It's the only meal you get on many remote mountaintops. The staple of bachelor/bachelorette diets. And after years of Maggi monopoly we can now chow Nissins, Paldos, Vit's too. But though these come with fancier seasonings, they're just as evil healthwise. Let's bin sodium and/or MSG, and do some real cooking.



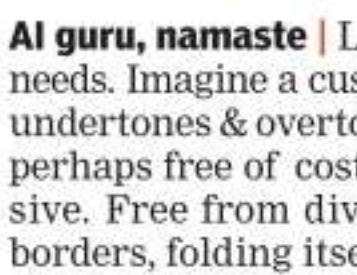
**Michelin star, come to India** | These fine-dining guides are being published across more than 25 countries. Does it make sense that the world's fifth largest economy, with so much food to die for, is yet to get a Michelin guide in any of its cities? This Frenchie prejudice must end. We also want to be able to wear our Rolex to a starred restaurant. We want gastronomic égalité.



**Nobel for Rushdie** | The decades since the publication of *Midnight's Children* have seen the fandom of Salman's writing and personal story spread phenomenally, one translation after another. It's time the Swedish Academy stops dissing him and picking sundry, obscure white Europeans. The anxiety of will he, won't he must end.



**Fast fashion, slow down** | Do you really need to buy two new shirts this week? To add to the 43 you already have, after giving 15 to the kabadiwala last week. The more the distance between us and Covid's second wave grows, the less sense all this 'revenge buying' makes. C'mon, give the wastelands a break. That kurta that you have had for a decade, is what really deserves bragging rights.



**AI guru, namaste** | Let this tech now service our spiritual needs. Imagine a customised digh-guru, free of parochial undertones & overtones, rites & rituals. Free of ego and perhaps free of cost too! Ever-present but never intrusive. Free from divisive religiosity, melting all gyan borders, folding itself to all your moods. It isn't maya.

## 24 PREDICTIONS FOR 2024

Plenty will happen aside from the temple & a likely Modi win. Mobiles will be prettier, there will be more love marriages, Indians will take more loans & have fewer mithais...

Chetan Bhagat



There's something special about January 1, isn't it? It feels like a fresh start. There is optimism. New opportunities, new habits and new resolutions. But a lot of this optimism will fizzle out fast. Most New Year resolutions will crash by January 12, the designated Quitters Day. My suggestion: Just have one, solid resolution. Don't load yourself up too much!

What would 2024 be like for India and the world? Just for fun, while acknowledging that life is unpredictable, here are 24 predictions for 2024.



## SOCIETY

**1. Better standard of living** | India's per capita income will rise another 7-8% this year, allowing citizens to live slightly better than before. Also, a slew of infrastructure projects – roads, highways, trains, airports – will open to give Indians a better quality of life.



**2. An early Diwali in January** | It is fair to expect the Ram Temple inauguration to be one of the grandest events India has seen in recent times.

**3. Travel on new highs** | It boomed post the pandemic but high airline ticket prices slowed down the party a bit. In 2024, expect airlines to finally add enough capacity to their fleet, allowing ticket prices to fall. Which, of course, will mean even more travel.

**4. Earth carrying on** | Humanity does seem to be on a self-destructive path. We create endless pollution, clear out forests, make nuclear bombs and currently have two major wars going on in the world. Sometimes it all feels too dire, but we will somehow trudge along and make it through one more year. Long term, well, who knows?



## TECHNOLOGY

**5. Advancing AI** | 2024 is the year when we will go beyond ChatGPT. Have an airline ticket issue? Maybe a non-human AI call centre will instantly pick up your call and solve your problem fast.

**6. Reinvented jobs** | India's software industry will need to reinvent as AI takes over a lot of tasks. Else those software jobs that used to be there for all Indian engineering graduates, will just not be there. Many other industries will also require adaptation and change.



**7. Prettier phones** | 2024 is likely to see price drops in phone and computer hardware, which will mean faster, prettier and cheaper phones.

**8. FaceID everywhere** | We have logins, passwords, barcode scans, physical ID checks – all done for security. However, your face as an ID can replace all this. It does raise privacy concerns, but the convenience offered is just too strong. One day, your face will be your Aadhaar, PAN, driver's licence, voter ID and maybe even your passport.



## POLITICS

**9. Miga Maga elections** | 2024 is the year of the mother of all democratic elections in the world – first India, then the US. This simultaneity happens only once in two decades. Expect major excitement in India as we go to the polls in April/May and near global excitement for the US general election in November. For avid election watchers, this is more fun than the cricket World Cup!

**10. BJP victory** | While predicting actual election results is always difficult, given current trends and surveys it looks like BJP



will return for a third term in 2024. That will be an incredible feat, even for the biggest democratic political party in the world today.

## 11. Polarisation prospers

Right wing vs left wing, North vs South, Android vs iOS, Hindu vs Muslim, Israel vs Palestine, people will pick a side and keep looking for evidence to support their confirmation bias all year round. This means no meaningful solutions will be found. But at least each side will be convinced they are absolutely right while the other side is completely wrong.

**12. INDIA struggles** | The opposition alliance as well as Congress will keep searching for

an existential narrative, which can coherently persuade voters to switch sides. This isn't just about a better, punchier slogan. It requires a bigger overhaul. But 2024 will not be the year when the opposition will pull this off.



## FINANCE

**13. More EMIs** | Indians will make more purchases such as gadgets, cars and handbags with 'buy now, pay later' schemes, EMIs and credit card loans. Stay away from debt if you can. Savings are sexy, not products bought with debt.

**14. More stock market investments** | Individual stock purchases, SIPs and mutual funds will also continue to see growth, because we have low penetration. Will the stock market also rise in 2024? That's impossible to predict, but the long-term trend of any stock market is usually towards growth.



**15. More inflation?** | There are two major wars going on globally. If these escalate, oil prices will rise and supply chains around the world will get affected. This in turn will lead to higher inflation.

**16. Pricier education/healthcare** | Indians spare no expense when it comes to educating their kids. Ditto for medical costs when it is a matter of life and death. Hence, we stretch ourselves to get the best. With more higher quality offerings, be it in schools or hospitals, the expenses will only go up. Save well for your kid's education and for medical emergencies.



## HEALTH

**17. Saying no to desserts** | With internet content raising greater awareness, people will become more health conscious. India has extremely high numbers for diabetes and hypertension cases. Many of these can be controlled with healthier lifestyles. In 2024, expect more people to finish their steps and skip their desserts.



**18. Diets to fads** | Crazy diets, superfood obsessions and unscientific health fashions will continue. People want quick, easy fixes that sadly just don't exist. No sauna or massage equipment can 'burn' your fat. Ghee cannot lubricate your joints. Mithai, even from an authentic old shop made with pure ingredients, is generally a bad idea for people who live sedentary lives.

**19. Calorie trackers** | Expect more adoption of fitness watches, sleep trackers and food diary apps. Do they help? They can. They measure things. And what gets measured, gets managed. You have to do the exercise yourself though.



**20. Anti-obesity drugs** | Diet and exercise are a slow, hard road to fitness. The attraction of easier solutions means huge demand for drugs like Wegovy and Ozempic. Already a rage in the US, these are likely to be adopted big time by India too in 2024. Their long-term effects are not known. Be careful! Choose the cleaner path to health.



## RELATIONSHIPS

**21. Delaying kids** | Rising real estate prices and school fees will make getting married and having kids more expensive. People are anyway taking longer to settle in their careers before getting married.

**22. Re-evaluating virtual connections** | Smartphones are little magic boxes, sucking all our attention and allowing us to connect with the world virtually. However, we all feel it – it's not the real thing. Society misses real connections, life experiences and more fulfilling relationships. Go out there, meet people, make eye contact and talk to them face to face. It's far more satisfying than being on the phone.

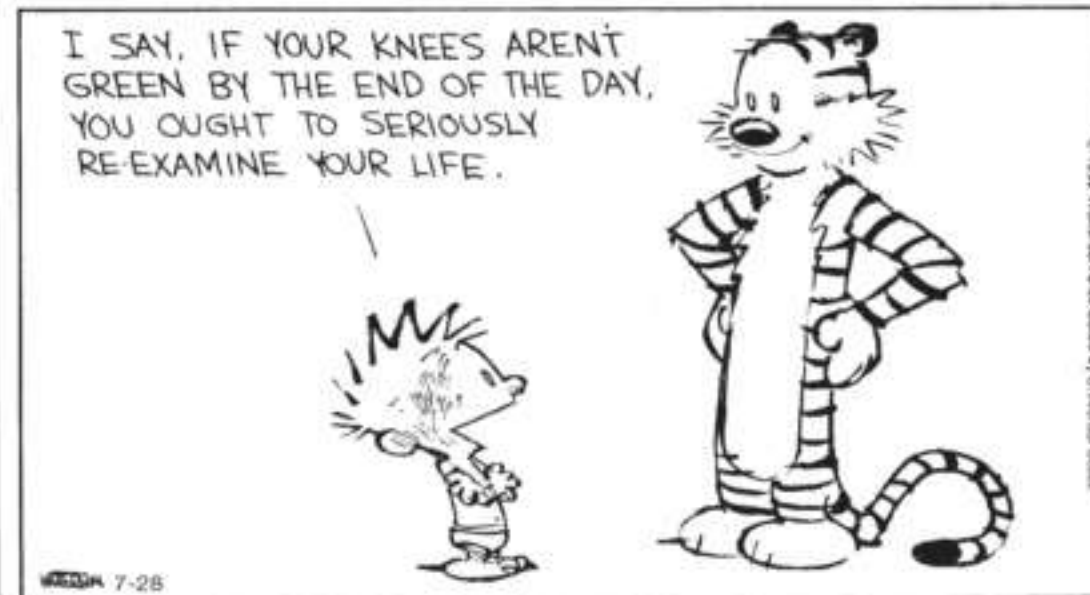
**23. Love marriages** | In India, we classify marriages as love or arranged, even though love marriages eventually need to be arranged and arranged marriages eventually need to have love. In 2024, as young Indians want to make more choices on their own, love marriages will continue to gain share.

**24. LGBTQ+ acceptance** | We do not have same sex marriages yet. However, India has made rapid strides since reading down Section 377, in terms of society's better acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community. We will do even better in 2024.

Whatever happens this year for you personally, always believe that things will be better and strive to be better with the passage of time. Best of luck and a Happy New Year!



## Calvin &amp; Hobbes



## Get High On Hope, A Brand New Year Is Here

Homayun Tabataba

The new year is a time for an injection of hope, meant to strengthen the psychological immune system. Some of us are naturally endowed with sufficient manasic shakti, mental strength, but the rest of us need to recommit to it, and the start of each year is a good time to do so.

I know a lady nearing 90 years, coming from a broken home, later facing a hostile grand-mother-in-law, being near starvation at times, suffering a miscarriage, enduring an attempted robbery with lethal weapons, and living in a war zone under raining Scud missiles. She survived five siblings, and in her 70s migrated to a country with a completely new context, whose language she is yet to be at ease with. Her mantra is, "There is nothing that has no solution." In spite of all her tribulations, her laughter even today makes windowpanes vibrate. What

has sustained her is a hopeful "this too shall pass" philosophy, an unflinching faith in positive outcomes.

Hopeful souls seem to have an internal gyroscope that counters the frequency of any external onslaught of chaotic and troubling times, by restoring balance, supported by the firm belief that nothing good or bad lasts forever, sarvam anityam, all circumstances are temporary.

Holding on to hope is known to reinforce patience and build resilience. Viktor Frankl, in his book *Man's Search For Meaning*, shows its incredibly effective life-saving value in the survivors of the concentration camps, which validates Emily Dickinson envisaging it as – "the thing with feathers...that perches in the soul, and sings the tune without the words, and never stops at all." Hope is not an artificial mood

elevator, but a life sustaining potion; tucked inside it lies a hidden fighting spirit, while hopelessness is a state of being that sucks one into a bottomless pit of despair and leads to giving up without a fight.

Those with hope proficiency, even when faced with incurable illness or a formidable foe or a very hopeless war, won't allow despair and futility to dampen their spirit. They turn to yet another of hope's coping mechanisms – prayer – which provides consolation, grace and stability.

Another key function of hope lies in looking at the big picture. As Martin Luther King Jr. saw it: "We must accept finite disappointments but never lose infinite hope."

The Bible's view on hope is to consider it an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast. A Quranic injunction is not to

lose hope nor be sad. However, Buddhists club hope with fear viewing both emerging from craving, hence a form of suffering, the recommended solution is the path of desirelessness.

Difficult times build our appreciation for what is good. Yet, hope provides perspective and appreciation of our current blessings. We maintain good cheer in times of disorientation and disquiet, because hopelessness and its cousin pessimism are soul eroding. Another protective measure is through self-imposed filters that limit exposure to toxic news and pessimistic people.

Hope, asha, apeksa, or omid, not only allows envisioning and anticipating a better consequence to a current impasse by inducing optimism and positive feelings but is also capable of pointing to multiple ways towards a goal, and the energy and stimulation to move in that direction. May we remember to dwell with hope in the year ahead.

## Sacredspace



The best way to not feel hopeless is to get up and do something. Don't wait for good things to happen to you. If you go out and make some good things happen, you will fill the world with hope, you will fill yourself with hope.

Barack Obama



**RADUCANU FEELING 'REBORN' AS 2024 TENNIS SEASON STARTS IN AUCKLAND**

**LEBRON JAMES PLAYS THROUGH ILLNESS IN LOSS TO MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES**

# 2023: A YEAR OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

**Despite Numerous Statistical Highs, Including Being Ranked No.1 In All Formats, The Big Prize In Men's Cricket Eluded The Indian Team**

Nitin.Naik@timesgroup.com

How would you sum up 2023 if you were an Indian cricket fan? Two words would do justice. "What if?" 2023 was a year where the Indian men's cricket team had two cracks at ending a 10-year wait for an ICC Trophy, but it came up short on both occasions in the WTC final at The Oval and the ODI World Cup final at Ahmedabad. And both times, it got outskilled by a familiar adversary: Australia.

What if India had picked Ashwin at the Oval in the WTC final? What if India had tried to bounce out Travis Head earlier? What if Head had nicked one of the many balls he played and missed in the first ten overs of that chase in Ahmedabad?

The loss on November 19 in Motera would scar the souls and puncture the spirits of those in the changing room more because India had played a flawless tournament till the semifinal, crushing opponents systematically, but cruelly had an off day in the game that mattered on a curiously prepared pitch that was slow and dry to start with and then changed dramatically when Australia started their chase of 240.

But to not celebrate the performances of the team, especially in the white-ball format, would be ungrateful.

The men's team played fifty-eight white-ball games (35 ODIs and 23 T20Is) this year and ended up winning forty-two out of them (27 in ODIs and fifteen in T20Is).

ODIs, a format that is losing relevance, was given a lifeline by the men in blue, especially during a feverish World Cup campaign where captain Rohit Sharma's thrilling assault on bowlers in the powerplay, captivated fans as it was both effective and selfless.

The skipper was unfairly criticized for his stroke in the final off Glenn Maxwell, which was pouched miraculously by Travis Head, but his 47 (31 balls) was exactly how he had batted right through the tournament, in fact right through the year.

With the heartbreak of the T20 World Cup semifinal vs England in Adelaide still fresh in his mind, the skipper had made up his mind that he was willing to buy the idea of India getting outclassed, but would not buy it if India ended up second best for want of intent. And he took it upon himself to not just stat pad but focus on giving the middle-order a cushion of runs so that they can bat deep without feeling the pressure of accelerating.

It was a template that worked perfectly in the marquee tournament. Virat Kohli played the ideal foil for Rohit's daredevilry, anchoring chases or giving the strokeplayers around him like KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer the freedom to go big without the worries of the team suffering a blowout. He logged six ODI hundreds in 2023 with three of them coming in the World Cup, none more important than the one he scored in the semifinal at the Wankhede Stadium against perennial nemesis New Zealand which made him the lone man



**Action Replay**

**DESOLATE:** Rohit Sharma (R) and Virat Kohli after India's loss in the World Cup final

to get to 50 ODI tons and surpass the record held by the great Sachin Tendulkar. It was a pity that his 765 runs in 11 matches did not result in a trophy more significant than the player of the tournament prize.

The same can be said about the skipper. Rohit was one of four Indian batters to log over 1000 ODI runs along with Shubman Gill (1584), Kohli (1377) and Rahul (1060) and his approach can best be established by the fact that he hit 67 of India's 250 ODI maximums in 2023 with 31 of them coming in the World Cup, a majority of those hits coming against top bowlers in the powerplay.

How you wish you had an intent meter sometimes. India's bowlers were not too bad either. How's this for a factoid? Arshdeep Singh's 5-37 at Johannesburg against South Africa last month was the eighth instance of an Indian bowler picking a five-wicket haul in 2023. Mohammed Shami, who had a dream World Cup campaign (24 wickets) produced three of them in the tournament. He also bagged one in Mohali vs Australia just before the World Cup started. Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj and Ravindra Jadeja were the others to make that distinguished list.

Siraj produced a spell for the ages in the Asia Cup final vs Sri Lanka in Colombo with his 6-21 including a four-wicket over; a first by an Indian in ODIs. He was also lethal in the World Cup with the new ball, invariably producing an early breakthrough. What if India had not changed their plan and gave him the new ball in the final too instead of bringing him on in the 17th over?

It was a story of What if for the women too. They

choked like they did in the Commonwealth Games final against who else, but Australia in the semifinal of the T20 World Cup at Newlands when skipper Harmanpreet Kaur was run out with her bat getting stuck in the turf. India needed forty off thirty-two balls with six wickets in hand and fell short by five runs.

What if Kaur had managed to ground her bat? But Kaur did find some well-deserved cheer later in the year as her team in the inaugural WPL, Mumbai Indians, went on to clinch the trophy. She also captained India to memorable Test triumphs over England and Australia in Mumbai late in the year. While big trophies in white-ball cricket elude the ladies, they tasted success in the Asian Games, winning the gold medal and the under-19 team led by Shafali Verma clinched the World Cup.

May be the continued growth and success of the WPL, will see more talented players coming through the system.

## INDIAN MEN'S TEAM'S SCHEDULE IN 2024

**TESTS:** 1 vs SA in SA; 5 vs Eng in Ind; 2 vs Bangladesh in Ind  
3 vs NZ in Ind; 4 vs Aus in Aus  
**T20Is:** 3 vs Afg in Ind; 3 vs SL in SL; T20 WC in USA and WI  
**ODIs:** 3 vs SL in SL



## INDIAN MEN IN INT'Ls IN 2023

Format	P	W	L	D/NR
Tests	8	3	3	2
ODIs	35	27	7	1
T20Is	23	15	7	1

All stats: Rajesh Kumar

**8** Number of hundreds by Virat Kohli — six in 27 ODIs and two in eight Tests — were the most by an Indian batter in international cricket.

**67** Number of sixes hit by Rohit Sharma in 26 innings this year is a world record for most sixes by any batter in a calendar year in ODIs, surpassing the 58 in 18 innings by Ab de Villiers in 2015.

**1** SHUBMAN GILL remains the only Indian batter to register hundreds in all three formats in international cricket — five in ODIs, one each in Tests and T20Is. Apart from becoming the youngest (23 years, 132 days) to post a double century in ODIs, he remains the only Indian to hit 200-plus in any format this year — 208 off 149 balls vs New Zealand at Hyderabad on January 18. With 1584 runs at an average of 63.36, including five hundreds and nine fifties, Gill was the highest run-scorer in ODIs in 2023.

**31** Number of sixes by Rohit in eleven innings in the 2023 WC is a record for most sixes by any batter in a single edition of the World Cup. His overall tally of 54 sixes in 28 innings is a new record at the World Cup — the first to complete 50-plus sixes.

**49** Wickets at an average of 20.48, including three instances of four or more wickets in 30 matches by Kuldeep Yadav are the most by any bowler in ODIs in 2023.

**765** Runs at an average of 95.62, including three hundreds and six fifties, in 11 innings by Virat Kohli in the 2023 WC is a record.

**"I'M SURE THAT THE SUN WILL COME UP TOMORROW MORNING. WE'LL LEARN FROM IT. WE'LL REFLECT. AND WE'LL MOVE ON, AS WILL EVERYONE ELSE."**  
—Rahul Dravid, India coach after the six-wicket loss in the World Cup final to Australia on November 19

**7/57**  
MOHAMMED SHAMI, with his career-best bowling performance in the first WC semifinal vs New Zealand at Wankhede Stadium, Mumbai on November 15, became the first Indian to bag a seven-wicket haul in ODIs/World Cup. He remains the only bowler to bag a seven-for in WC knockouts.

**"IT WASN'T EASY TO DIGEST, BUT YEAH, LIFE MOVES ON. BUT IT WAS NOT SO EASY TO JUST MOVE ON. I'VE ALWAYS GROWN UP WATCHING 50-OVER WORLD CUP AND TO ME, THAT WAS, YOU KNOW, THE ULTIMATE PRIZE, THE 50-OVER WORLD CUP."**  
—Rohit Sharma, India captain

**"IT'S STUFF OF DREAMS. IT'S VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO EXPLAIN THIS, BUT IF I COULD PAINT THE PERFECT PICTURE, I WOULD WANT THIS TO BE THE PICTURE. MY LIFE PARTNER ANUSHKA, SHE'S SITTING THERE. MY HERO, SACHIN PAJJI, HE'S SITTING THERE. AND I WAS ABLE TO GET THE 50TH IN FRONT OF ALL OF THEM."**  
—Virat Kohli, on his 50th ODI ton

**"REWARD FOR ALL THE HARD WORK WE HAVE DONE FOR SO MANY YEARS. CREDIT TO THE TEAM AND THE SUPPORT STAFF. REWARD FOR THE HARD WORK AND PATIENCE."**  
—Indian women's captain HARMANPREET KAUR after defeating Australia in the one-off Test match

## GALLERY

### Ugandan athlete Kiplagat found dead in Kenya

**Nairobi:** Ugandan athlete Benjamin Kiplagat has been found dead in Kenya, police said on Sunday, with local media reporting he had been murdered. The Kenyan-born Kiplagat, 34, had represented Uganda internationally in the 3,000m steeplechase, including at several Olympic Games and World Championships. His body was found in a car on Saturday night on the outskirts of the Rift Valley town of Eldoret, which is home to many athletes who train in high-altitude area.

**Anahat wins U-19 title in Edinburgh:** Teen sensation Anahat Singh produced a dominant performance, bagging the girls' U-19 title at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh. Anahat claimed a 11-6, 11-1, 11-5 victory over home favourite Robyn McAlpine in the final.

**NZ beat Bangladesh in final T20 to level series:** New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner took four wickets before a rearguard batting effort helped the hosts beat Bangladesh by 17 runs via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method in the rain-hit third T20 International on Sunday to level the series 1-1.

**Djokovic leads Serbia to a 2-1 victory:** Making a triumphant return to Perth after a decade, Novak Djokovic led Serbia to a 2-1 win over China at the United Cup on Sunday. Djokovic beat Zhang Zhizhen 6-3, 6-2 and then teamed up with Olga Danilovic to clinch the decisive mixed doubles encounter 6-4, 1-6, 10-6 against Zheng Qinwen and Zhang in the Group E match. AGENCIES

## Warner all set for Sydney farewell

**Sydney:** David Warner has been given the hometown farewell from Test cricket he craved after the opening batsman was named in an unchanged Australia line-up for the third and final Test against Pakistan in Sydney next week.

Warner said in June he wanted to call time on his 12-year Test career at the Sydney Cricket Ground and, with the Australians holding an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series, the 37-year-old has been granted his wish.

"The national selection panel have retained the same squad from Melbourne to Sydney as we look to clean sweep the Test series," chief selector George Bailey said.

"We look forward to celebrating David Warner's final Test match and his incredible career at his home ground." Warner went into the current series with question marks over his form due to a lack of Test runs, but a rapidfire 164 in the first innings of the opening Test in Perth erased any doubts over his position in the team.

Australia won that Test



**SWANSONG:** David Warner

by 360 runs before Pat Cummins put on a man-of-the-match performance to seal the second Test in Melbourne last week — the captain taking 10 wickets as Pakistan lost by 79 runs in four days. The series win was the fourth in a row at home for the Australians, who have won 10 Tests out of 12 since Cummins took over as captain ahead of the 2021-22 Ashes series. **REUTERS**  
**Australia squad:** Pat Cummins (captain), Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc and David Warner.

## Backed for top-order job, feisty Richa produces a special knock

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**Mumbai:** Even though India lost the second ODI by three runs on Saturday at the Wankhede Stadium to lose yet another home ODI series to Australia, they would be happy with the way young wicket-keeper-bat Richa Ghosh batted in the top order, scoring a fighting, career-best 96 off 117 balls, in a knock which included 13 fours, despite battling severe cramps.

In a much-talked about move, India promoted the talented batter, who has been used mostly as a finisher in the past, to the pivotal No 3 spot. Ghosh responded by producing a scintillating knock to almost take India to the 289-run target. Talking to the reporters post the second ODI, India's head coach Amol Muzumdar made it clear that the team management was looking to groom Richa at one down. "We believe Richa can be a good top-order player. We believe in her talent and you've seen the kind of shots she can play. If she can use the first 10 overs and then play to the situation, I think that's the best spot for her," he said.



**SWASHBUCKLING:** Richa Ghosh

In the past, several talented Indian batters — Rohit Sharma's elevation to the opening slot in early 2013 comes to the mind — have seen their careers turn after they were moved from No 5 or No 6 to the top three "So, the batting order has been Richa at number three, our number four is Harman (Harmanpreet Kaur) and number five is Jemi (Jemimah Rodrigues). Unfortunately, Harman wasn't feeling too well. That's why she was dropped down. Otherwise, there is no up and down. Sometimes, in a game as tough as this, you need to address those situations. But Richa has been at number three," added Muzumdar.

Showering praises on the 20-year-old from Bengal, who scored a half-century on Test debut against Australia in the one-off Test at the Wankhede a few days back, Muzumdar said, "Richa (played a) fantastic knock, what a knock it was. Under pressure, at number three — a new position for her — and she's just proven why she is spoken about highly. Her talent speaks for herself. I think probably a hundred would have been an appropriate one for her. But unfortunately she got out. I think it was a special knock," said Muzumdar.

### 'We're still work in progress'

In a match in which both the teams dropped as many as 11 catches, India paid for their horrendous fielding, which saw them grass seven opportunities, slightly more than Australia's four. Muzumdar confessed that his team was poor in the field, and called the side 'a work in progress.' "There's no doubt that our fielding was below par. We dropped about six catches. We are still a work in progress. We will spend some time on fielding and fitness," he said.

## 'Indian pacers will have to be creative in Cape Town'

**Cape Town:** The Indian pace bowlers were not patient on a good bowling surface during the opening Test against South Africa, a virtue they will need in abundance on a batting paradise at Newlands, where spinners will have little role to play, reckoned legendary **Allan Donald**. India lost the first Test by an innings and 32 runs after conceding 408 in the first innings on a spicy Centurion track that offered steep bounce and enough lateral movement.

"I know South Africa probably got the better of the conditions, no questions about that. They pitched the ball in a 5 and 5.5 meter area and gave it a chance to do something off the deck. But what they did better than India...they were more patient in that area and even they used the short ball a little bit more in the second innings," Donald said. The 57-year-old, who took 330 wickets in just 72 Tests, feels Indians were waiting for things to happen.

"For India, there was one debutant (Prasidh Krishna). I thought (Jasprit) Bumrah, but

Indian bowlers searched too much for things to happen. They quickly reverted to shorter balls and then lost their length a bit on the shorter side and then got opened up on either side — square leg, off side and SA batters capitalized."

"Come Cape Town, it will be hard work and there will be a lot more energy from both teams. Cape Town will be hard work and it will bring honesty out of both the attacks," Donald said.

What is it that makes Cape Town way more difficult than Centurion? "You need to be more creative in Cape Town as wickets are a lot more flatter and partnerships will stretch and that's traditionally as someone who knows it will be tougher Tests," he added.

Donald said if India envisage any chance of restoring parity, they need to use the new ball judiciously. "The massive emphasis is on the new ball because traditionally if there's a South westerly wind blowing across Newlands, then you know that is going to dry the pitch up. But not in any way or form I think the pitch will turn." PTI

# Agreed draws okay, pre-arranged with ridiculous moves not!

## Chief Arbiter's Decision To Punish Dubov, Nepo Divides Chess Community

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**I**van Syrovoy of Slovakia, chief arbiter of the World Blitz championship in Uzbekistan, took a questionable, yet pivotal decision on Friday. He used his discretion to conclude that Russians Daniil Dubov and Ian Nepomniachtchi had brought the game into disrepute with their "pre-arranged"

draw in the 11th round and doctored them half a point each.

Many arbiters and grandmasters the world over were not aware that arbiters have such powers. Chennai-based chess coach RB Ramesh said, "I haven't thought much about it yet. A few initial thoughts: Are pre-agreed draws illegal? Because it happens a lot in tournaments. Were the moves played not proper? If yes, then the punishment was for those moves or for agreeing for a draw? What if these games were not shown live. Was this acceptable (then)? Is this going to be applied universally or is this just one reaction to appear proactive?"



Dubov and Nepomniachtchi

The rules state a draw can be "agreed" (over the board) but cannot be "pre-arranged". The knight moves were legal but they were not proper by any stretch of imagination. It appears that the punishment was for making a mockery of the sport in a frivolous way.

The dance of two knights was so unspectacular that after

12 moves, the starting position of the board was reached again.

Valetina Gunina, the newly-crowned women's world blitz champion, said, "It is weird that in such tournaments, you have to follow rules and respect (the sport)."

Magnus Carlsen, who had hired Dubov as his assistant during the world title match against Nepo in 2022, told in a post-tournament press conference: "It's a good thing that the games that are obviously pre-arranged start to be punished. I think the chief arbiters and the Appeals Committee did a good job.

"Obviously, as a chess player it feels a bit strange that a tournament is decided with something that is not happening on the chess board. But the important thing is that people will think twice about pre-arranging games like that again," added Carlsen.

The arbiter's actions in Uzbekistan only shows that he was not against the agreed draw but against the draw in such fashion (pre-arranged and making mockery with meaningless moves). Carlsen said, "I don't think it should be possible to offer a draw in chess. Except very obvious draws. If you want to make a draw, you find

ways to repeat moves if the position is drawish."

Seven-time former national champion Praveen Thipsay told TOI: "I completely disapprove of the arbiter's decision for several reasons. The FIDE rules or tournament rules do not forbid such games. Draw by repetition and draw by agreement are rights given to players. There rules need to be changed before an action. There was a three-move draw earlier. No action was taken in that case, so the action by the arbiter in the Dubov-Nepo game violates the rules of fairplay and equal treatment."

It appears that protest is not

mandatory in such cases and the arbiter invoked rule number 12.9.5 which has a provision of penalising the players.

Five-time world champion V Anand said during the web-cast: "Really irresponsible game (Dubov vs Nepo). They were irritated with the wait and whatever (the round started late due to clock malfunction and delay for the rounds). But what does that have got to do with this (the kind of moves played)?"

"They drew the game in ridiculous fashion. The knight moves made it clear that it is coordinated because it cannot be an accident."



# FULHAM SHOCK FOR ARSENAL

## 2-1 Defeat Dents Gunners' Title Challenge; Tottenham End Bournemouth's Hot Streak

London: Arsenal's Premier League title challenge suffered another blow in a 2-1 defeat at Fulham on Sunday, as Tottenham beat Bournemouth 3-1 to close in on their north London rivals.

The Gunners' high hopes of a first league title in 20 years have been rocked by two damaging defeats in four days. Mikel Arteta was looking for a response after losing 2-0 at home to West Ham on Thursday and the visitors started brightly at Craven Cottage. Bukayo Saka pounced to tap home his first goal in six games after Bernd Leno parried Gabriel Martinelli's initial effort.

But Arsenal failed to build on their early advantage and Fulham hit back to snap a three-game losing run in the Premier League without even scoring a goal. Raul Jimenez was badly missed during his three-game ban for a red card at Newcastle and the Mexi-

can kickstarted the Fulham fightback with his fourth goal in as many games.

Former Arsenal winger William sent Tom Cairney free down the left and his dangerous low cross was swept home by Jimenez at the back post. Martinelli was inches away from restoring Arsenal's lead before the break.

But it was Fulham who were the better side in the second half and they got their reward just before the hour mark. Arsenal failed to clear a corner and the ball broke kindly for Bobby De Cordova-Reid to smash home from close range.

Only a fine save from David Raya to deny Cairney and the crossbar from Andreas Pereira's free-kick prevented Arsenal from suffering further punishment in the pouring rain in west London.

But enough damage may have been done to their title aspirations over the past week.



Bobby Reid (centre) of Fulham celebrates with teammates after scoring their team's second goal on Sunday

Arsenal remain in fourth, two points behind leaders Liverpool and level on 40 points with Manchester City, but having played a game more than both their title rivals.

Arteta's men could even be outside the top four by the time they are next in league action in three weeks' time as Tottenham closed to with-

in a point of the Champions League places.

Ange Postecoglou's men shrugged off a mounting injury crisis to inflict Bournemouth's first defeat in eight games. Pape Sarr's precise finish into the bottom corner opened the scoring after just nine minutes.

But the Senegalese mid-

### LLORIS JOINS LAFC AFTER LONG STINT WITH TOTTENHAM

Los Angeles: Former World Cup champion Hugo Lloris became the latest 35-year-old-plus player to join Major League Soccer when the goalkeeper agreed to a one-year contract with Los Angeles FC and left Tottenham after 11 1/2 seasons. LA announced the deal on Saturday and said the agreement with the 37-year-old included options for 2025 and 2026, though it did not say whether the options belong to the team or the player. AGENCIES

### RABIOT SCORES WINNER AGAINST ROMA AS JUVE CLOSE IN ON INTER

Turin: Adrien Rabiot's second-half goal earned Juventus a 1-0 home win over AS Roma on Saturday that took them within two points of Serie A leaders Inter Milan.

Juve made the breakthrough two minutes after halftime when French midfielder Rabiot was left unmarked as he collected a flick from Dusan Vlahovic and calmly slotted home.

Juve finished the year in second place with 43 points from 18 games behind Inter, who drew 1-1 at Genoa on Friday. Jose Mourinho's Roma are seventh with 28 points.

"It was a good game, because playing against Roma is never easy, especially when Mourinho is on the opposition bench," Juve manager Massimiliano Allegri told DAZN.

"At this moment, I think we are in good shape physically, the last three days of training were good too and we had some impressive passing moves today. We gave the ball away a bit too often and need to work on that, but above all on the diagonal passes and how to play out from the back." REUTERS

### Salah to lead Egypt in Africa Cup of Nations

Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah is the leading name in Egypt's squad for the Africa Cup of Nations released by the record seven-time titleholder's Portuguese manager Rui Vitoria on Saturday. Salah will be joined in attack by Al-Ahly forward Mahmoud Kahraba.

But out of the running for the competition are Abdallah Said, of Egyptian club Pyramids, Mahmoud Hamdy from Zamalek, and Al Ahly duo Hussein El Shahat and Mohamed Magdy. Egypt were beaten by Senegal in the last Cup of Nations final in 2021 and their last triumph dates back to 2010. AFP



## Asian Cup: Stimac looks for stability

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Panaji: Given the number of Indian football fans in Qatar, national team coach Igor Stimac feels his team will "feel at home" for the AFC Asian Cup 2023, but he isn't putting any pressure on the team to deliver results at the continental tournament. India find themselves in a tough group that includes World Cuppers Australia, strong Uzbekistan and Syria. Injuries have crippled the team with three regulars - Anwar Ali, Jeakson Singh and Ashique Kuruniyan - all missing, while others have also been sidelined.

India landed in Doha late on Saturday and were greeted by several fans cheering. Stimac's team will have plenty of support when they face Australia in the opener on January 13, though unlike 2019, they will find the going tough in the group stage.

"This group is much, much stronger than in 2019," Stimac told reporters during a virtual interaction on Sunday. "Whatever we do, as many points as we get, would be fantastic. The most important thing for us is to have a good performance and to play stable football. I am not thinking about results, not putting any pressure on the players."

India begin their campaign against Australia, "one of the favourites here," according to Stimac. The 1998 FIFA World Cup bronze medal winner ranked his side as "outsiders in the group" and was all praise for Uzbekistan, "one of the dark horses of the tournament with fantastic recent results."

As for India, Stimac hoped they would continue to play "fearless football," never mind the opposition. "Our top priority this year is to qualify for the third round of the World Cup Qualifiers as all these games from the Asian Cup."

## Khalid Jamil named Jamshedpur FC coach

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Kolkata: Khalid Jamil on Sunday was appointed the coach of Jamshedpur FC for the remainder of the season after the club decided to mutually part ways with coach Scot Cooper after their 1-4 loss against Odisha FC in Bhubaneswar on December 29.

Jamil rose to fame when he won the I-League, the then top-tier league in the country, with Aizawl FC in 2016-17 - the first time that a team from the northeast had won a national title. The victory saw Jamil become one of the most sought-after coaches at that time and he went onto coach both East Bengal and Mohun Bagan.

Khalid's first tryst with Indian Super League was with NorthEast United FC where he was the head of academy during the 2019-20 season. He was handed the reins of NEUFC on an interim basis in 2020-21 and once again his coaching acumen was there for everyone to witness as he led the Highlanders to the playoffs that included a 10-game unbeaten streak.

The team lost to ATK Mohun Bagan in the last-four stage that was played over two legs but the good showing saw Jamil being made the head coach of the team in the next season. It was the first time that an Indian was given the honours in the tournament but the love affair didn't carry on for long as the

team finished 10th in the 11-team table in the 2021-22 season.

While the team failed to click as a whole, Jamil reportedly lost the backing of the dressing room midway into the season as his training methods became unpopular with the players. He even gave a fiery interview where he accused the technical director Ohad Efrat of treating him like 'dirt.'

Jamil now has the arduous task of taking Jamshedpur out of the abyss. Although JFC won the Shield in 2021-22, they had a disastrous outing last season and are currently placed 10th on the table with just 9 points from 12 matches.

It will obviously be a huge challenge



but Jamil is quite up for it. "I want to thank the club management for giving me this opportunity and I feel very excited to join Jamshedpur. Our target is to bring Jamshedpur to a better position and for that we all must work hard," said Jamil in a statement.



SERVING A REMINDER: Rafael Nadal in action on Sunday

## Nadal makes comeback in Brisbane doubles loss

Brisbane: Rafael Nadal returned to action for the first time since January at the Brisbane International on Sunday, losing his doubles match but overall showing no obvious after-effects of the hip injury that ruined his year.

The 22-time Grand Slam champion, who is gearing up for the Jan. 14-28 Australian Open, sustained the hip problem in his second round loss at Melbourne Park at the start of 2023 and ended his season early after having surgery in June.

Nadal rekindled his partnership with retired veteran Marc Lopez, with whom he won an Olympic gold medal in 2016, for his comeback but the duo lost 6-4, 6-4 to Australians Max Purcell and Jordan Thompson at a packed Pat Rafter Arena.

"It's great to see Rafa back," said Thompson. "I've been on the receiving end a couple of times in singles, so it's nice to get him back on a doubles court."

The 37-year-old Nadal was warmly welcomed by fans who held up Spanish flags and supportive messages while the lo-

udest cheers were reserved for his trademark whipped shots and a powerful crosscourt backhand winner in the opening set.

Nadal is likely to get a similar reception in his singles opener on Tuesday against qualifier Dominic Thiem, whom he beat in the 2018 and 2019 French Open finals and holds a 9-6 win-loss record against.

Former women's world number one Naomi Osaka will also make her comeback following maternity break when she meets Tamara Korpatsch on Monday.

The 26-year-old from Japan last competed on the tour in September 2022 and welcomed her first child, daughter Shai, in July.

Former U.S. Open champion Sloane Stephens got her campaign off to a good start as she beat Katerina Siniakova 7-5 6-3 while Camila Giorgi survived a scare to get past Peyton Stearns 5-7 6-2 6-3.

Russian 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva also reached the second round with a 6-2 6-3 win over Diana Shnaider. REUTERS

## Thiem has on-court encounter with snake!

Brisbane: Former US Open champion Dominic Thiem had a brush with one of Australia's most venomous snakes during a qualifying match at the Brisbane International on Saturday.

Thiem was a set down to Australian James McCabe when fans courtside spotted the 50 centimeter eastern brown snake, whose venom is rated the second most toxic in the world.

Security personnel quickly arrived, but the umpire had to stop play as the snake slithered on to the court to the shock of the players and fans.

"I really love animals, especially exotic ones," Thiem said. "But they said it was a really

poisonous snake and it was close to the ballkids, so it was a really dangerous situation.

"It's something that has never happened to me and is something I'll definitely never forget."

The snake was safely removed and play resumed.

But Thiem, formerly ranked No. 3 and now No. 98, was not yet out of danger as he had to save three match points before leveling the first-round qualifier in a second-set tiebreak. The Austrian went on to win 2-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4.

Thiem reached the final of the 2020 Australian Open, and won the US Open later that year. AP

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China & Maldives are in talks for Muizzu's first bilateral visit to Beijing. If it happens, Muizzu will be the first elected prez to visit China before India trip, **INSIDE JACKET**

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Hon'ble Prime Minister



**Shri Bhajanlal Sharma**  
Hon'ble Chief Minister, Rajasthan

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Department of Food and Civil Supplies, Rajasthan



# US troops repel attack on ship in Red Sea, kill 10 Houthi rebels

Shoot Down Ballistic Missiles, Sink 3 Of 4 Militant Boats In Deadliest Clash

The US military said Sunday that its forces opened fire on Houthi rebels after they attacked a cargo ship in the Red Sea, killing several of them in an escalation of the maritime conflict linked to the Gaza war. The Houthis acknowledged that 10 of their fighters died in the confrontation and warned of consequences.

In a series of statements, the US Central Command said the crew of the USS Gravelly destroyer first shot down two anti-ship ballistic missiles fired at the Singapore-flagged Maersk Hangzhou late Saturday, after the vessel reported getting hit by a missile earlier that evening as it sailed through the Southern Red Sea. Four small boats then attacked the same cargo ship with small arms fire early Sunday and rebels tried to board the vessel, the US Navy said. Next, the USS Gravelly and helicopters from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier responded to the Maersk Hangzhou's distress call and issued verbal warnings to the attackers, who responded by firing on the helicopters. "The US Navy helicopters returned fire in self-defence," sinking three of the four boats and killing the people on board while the fourth boat fled the area, the US Central Command said. No harm to US personnel or equipment, or casualties from the cargo ship, were reported.

The events surrounding the Maersk Hangzhou represented the 23rd illegal attack by the Houthis on international shipping since November 19, the Central Command said. It was the first time the US Navy said its personnel had killed



**MAERSK PAUSES RED SEA SAILINGS AFTER ATTACK:** The Houthi attack on Maersk's container vessel on Sunday prompted the company to pause all sailing through the Red Sea for 48 hours. Maersk Hangzhou's crew was safe and it continued its journey north to Port Suez, the company said. The attack was the 23rd by the Iran-backed militant group in about 6 weeks

## Netanyahu vows long war until victory

Israeli strikes in central Gaza killed at least 35 people Sunday, hospital officials said, as the military targeted areas in several parts of the territory a day after the country's PM Benjamin Netanyahu said the war will continue for "many more months", resisting international calls for a ceasefire. Israel's unprecedented air and ground offensive has killed over 21,600 Palestinians, according to the health ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza. The Israeli military also said it was battling militants in the southern city of Khan Younis, where Israel believes Hamas leaders are hiding. The magnitude of the destruction in Gaza coupled with the war's length has raised questions about the achievability of Israel's goal to quash Hamas as well as about its plans for post-war Gaza. Netanyahu has said Israel must maintain open-ended security control over the Gaza Strip, without saying what would come next.



At a news conference Saturday, where he said the war would continue until "absolute victory", he reiterated his intention to preserve an Israeli military foothold in a narrow strip of land in southern Gaza near the border with Egypt. "(It) must be in our hands, it must be sealed. It's clear that any other agreement will not guarantee the demilitarisation that we need and require," he said. Israel says Hamas has smuggled weapons in through the Egyptian border, but Egypt is likely to oppose any Israeli military presence there.

Houthi fighters since the Red Sea attacks started. For over a month, Iran-backed Houthis have claimed attacks on ships

in the Red Sea that they say are either linked to Israel or heading to Israeli ports. They say their attacks aim to end the Is-

raeli military offensive in Gaza that was triggered by Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel.

The weekend attack was the latest and perhaps deadliest such incident involving the Houthis, who control a large swath of northern Yemen. In early Dec, the USS Carney destroyer shot down three drones during a sustained Houthi attack on commercial ships in the Red Sea, the Pentagon said. The US military has not struck directly at the Houthis in Yemen, wary of an escalation that could cause the war in Gaza to further inflame West Asia.

The clash came just days after Maersk said that it was resuming voyages through the Red Sea and the Suez Canal. For about a week before that announcement, the company's ships had been avoiding the area because of safety concerns. On Sunday, Maersk said in a statement that it would pause "all transits through the area for the next 48 hours" as it investigates the attack and assesses security in the waterway. The crew of the Maersk Hangzhou, which was travelling from Singapore to Port Suez, was safe, the company said.

The incidents have prompted some companies to avoid the Red Sea, rerouting their vessels around the Cape of Good Hope, pushing up shipping rates even as longer voyages increase delays. The US announced this month that it had set up a naval taskforce to try to ensure safe passage for commercial ships in the Red Sea. The members of the initiative, Operation Prosperity Guardian, include Bahrain, UK, France, Italy and the Netherlands.

# As relations with India sour, Maldives' new president planning trip to China

If It Works Out, Muizzu Will Become First To Do So Before Travelling To Delhi

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China and the Maldives are in talks for a bilateral visit to Beijing by President Mohamed Muizzu that could take place, as a source in Male told TOI. If it works out, Muizzu will become the first democratically elected Maldivian president to visit China before travelling to India.

In a break from the past, defying successive Maldivian presidents who chose India as their first port of call, Muizzu had first visited Türkiye as president, before landing in Dubai for the COP28 summit.

In fact, every Maldivian president since the dawn of multiparty democracy in 2008 in the strategically located Indian Ocean country, including virulently anti-India leaders like Mohamed Waheed in 2012 and Abdulla Yameen 2 years later, had first visited India, a fact often cited by Indian authorities as symbolic of India's "pre-



**However, China will only be the third country that Muizzu will travel to. His visit first to Türkiye on way to COP28 in Dubai was seen by some as signalling to both India and China that Maldives will not remain dependent on either of them for its development objectives**

eminent" position in the Maldives and the latter's stated India First policy.

However, China will only be the third country that the newly elected president will travel to. Muizzu's visit to Türkiye was seen also by some as signalling to both India and China that the Maldives will not remain dependent on either of them for its development objectives.

Buoyed perhaps by the exit of Muizzu's pro-India predecessor Ibrahim Solih, China seems to have lost no time in inviting Muizzu, whose aides have denied repeatedly the presi-

dent's characterisation in the media as a China-leaning leader. It's not clear yet if Muizzu has received a similar invite from India, which will follow closely the outcome of Muizzu's meeting with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping.

The visit will come in the middle of concerns in India about Muizzu's insistence on driving out Indian military personnel involved in operating naval choppers gifted by India to the Maldives for HADR activities. While India is hoping for a workable solution for continued operations of these

Indian assets, Muizzu said after his meeting with PM Narendra Modi on the margins of COP28 that India had agreed to withdraw its troops. In the middle of all this, Maldives recently also announced it had decided to walk out of an agreement with India that allowed the Indian Navy to carry out hydrographic surveys in Maldivian waters. The agreement had been signed during Modi's visit to Male in 2019, when Solih was the president.

The last Maldivian president to visit China was Yameen, who worked overtime to target Indian interests in the country in the last year of his presidency. In 2017, The visit saw the two countries signing a secretive free trade agreement and also a deal to let China build an observatory in one of the westernmost atolls, setting off concerns in India that it would allow China a vantage point of an important Indian Ocean shipping route through which many merchant and other vessels pass.

## WORLD SAYS HAPPY 2024 WITH A BANG!



Sydney and Auckland were among the world's first major cities to ring in 2024, with revellers cheering spectacular fireworks displays that lit up the skies over Sydney Harbour and New Zealand's tallest structure, Sky Tower. As the clock struck midnight in Australia, tonnes of explosives erupted in a 12-minute display that focused on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. More than 1 million people watched from the shore and from boats in the harbour. In Auckland, a city of 1.7 million people, the countdown began on an illuminated digital display near the top of the 1,076-foot communications and observation tower.

## Xi: Reunification with Taiwan inevitable

Beijing: China's "reunification" with Taiwan is inevitable, President Xi Jinping said in his New Year's address on Sunday, striking a stronger tone than he did last year with less than two weeks to go before the Chinese-claimed island elects a new leader. The January 13 presidential and parliamentary elections are happening at a time of fraught relations between Beijing and Taipei.

"The reunification of the motherland is a historical in-

evitability," Xi said, though the official English translation of his remarks published by the Xinhua news agency used a more simple phrase: "China will surely be reunified". "Compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should be bound by a common sense of purpose and share in the glory of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," he added. The official English translation wrote "all Chinese" rather than "compatriots".

Last year, Xi said only that people on either side of the strait are "members of one and the same family" and that he hoped people on both sides will work together to "jointly foster lasting prosperity of the Chinese nation". China has taken an exception to current vice-president Lai Ching-te, the presidential candidate for Taiwan's ruling party and leading in opinion polls by varying margins, saying he is a dangerous separatist.

# Russia launches fresh drone strikes in Ukraine in retaliation for Belgorod attack that killed 24

Kyiv: Russia launched a fresh drone assault on Ukraine after promising that strikes on the Russian border city of Belgorod that killed 24 people Saturday "would not go unpunished." The Ukrainian Air Force said Sunday that it had shot down 21 of 49 drones launched by Russian forces overnight.

The retaliatory Russian attack wounded 28 people in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. A hotel, kindergarten, apartment buildings, shops and administrative buildings sustained damage, according to the regional prosecutor's office. Russia's defence ministry



A Ukrainian child holds a placard reading 'Dad, I'm waiting for you' during a rally in Kyiv of relatives and friends of prisoners of war

said it had targeted "decision-making centers and military facilities" in Kharkiv. It said the hit on the Kharkiv Palace

Hotel had "destroyed representatives of the Main Intelligence Directorate and Ukrainian Armed Forces" involved in the "terrorist attack" in Belgorod.

Ukrainian interior minister Ihor Klymenko said a British journalist was among the wounded, while public German broadcaster ZDF said Sunday that one of its TV crews had been in the hotel. In the Kyiv region that surrounds Ukraine's capital, a Russian drone attack caused a fire at a critical infrastructure facility, local officials said. They did not identify the nature of the facility. Russian troops additionally

shelled the southern Ukrainian city of Kherson on Sunday, killing a 14-year-old boy.

On Saturday, shelling in the centre of Belgorod killed two dozen people, including three children. Another 108 people were wounded in the strike, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said Sunday, making the attack one with the most casualties on Russian soil since the start of the war 22 months ago. Russian authorities accused Ukraine of carrying out the attack, which took place the day after an 18-hour Russian aerial bombardment across Ukraine killed 41 civilians.

## Kim calls to boost N-arsenal, says US making war inevitable

Seoul: North Korea vowed to launch three new spy satellites, build military drones, and boost its nuclear arsenal in 2024 as leader Kim Jong-un said US policy is making war inevitable, state media reported on Sunday. Kim lashed out at Washington in lengthy remarks wrapping up five days of ruling party meetings that set economic, military and foreign policy goals for the coming year.

"Because of reckless moves by the enemies to invade us, it is a fait accompli that a war can break out at any time on the Korean peninsula," Kim said. He ordered the military to prepare to "pacify the entire territory of South Korea," including with nuclear bombs if necessary, in response to any attack. Kim's speech comes ahead of a year that will see pivotal elections in both South Korea and the US.

South Korea's defence ministry condemned Pyongyang's plans to press ahead with its nuclear ambitions. "If North Korea attempts to use nuclear weapons against us, we will retaliate overwhelmingly..." the defence ministry said in a statement. The US has also increased drills and deployed more military assets near the Korean peninsula.

Kim said the return of such weapons had completely transformed South Korea into a "forward military base and nuclear arsenal" of the US. "If we look closely at the confrontational military actions by the enemy forces... the word 'war' has become a realistic reality and not an abstract concept," Kim said that he has no choice but to press forward with his nuclear ambitions and forge deeper ties with countries that oppose the US. N Korea has deep ties with both China and Russia.

## California law banning guns in public takes effect today

Los Angeles: A California law that bans people from carrying firearms in most public places will take effect on New Year's Day, even as a court case continues to challenge the law.

A US district judge issued a ruling on December 20 to block the law from taking effect, saying it violates the Second Amendment of the US Constitution and deprives people of their ability to defend themselves and their loved ones.

But on Saturday, a federal appeals court put a temporary hold on the district judge's ruling. The appeals court decision allows the law to go into effect as the legal fight continues. Attorneys are scheduled to file arguments to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals in January and in February.

The law, signed by Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom, prohibits people from carrying concealed guns in 26 places including public parks and playgrounds, churches,



banks and zoos. The ban applies regardless of whether the person has a permit to carry a concealed weapon. One exception is for privately owned businesses that put up signs saying people are allowed to bring guns on their premises.

"This ruling will allow our common-sense gun laws to remain in place while we appeal the district court's dangerous ruling," Newsom posted on X. Newsom has said he will keep pushing for stricter gun measures.

## Paula Abdul says Nigel Lythgoe sexually assaulted her in 2000s

Los Angeles: Paula Abdul has accused former "American Idol" producer Nigel Lythgoe of sexually assaulting her in the early 2000s when she was a judge on the reality competition show, according to a new lawsuit. The lawsuit filed Friday in Los Angeles also accuses Lythgoe of sexually assaulting Abdul after she left "American Idol" and became a judge on Lythgoe's other competition show "So You Think You Can Dance."

Lythgoe said in a statement that he was "shocked and saddened" to hear of the allegations made by Abdul, who he said he considered a "dear" and "entirely platonic" friend. "While Paula's history of erratic behaviour is well known, I can't pretend to understand exactly why she would file a lawsuit that she must know is untrue. But I can promise that I will fight this appalling smear with everything I have," Lythgoe said.

The lawsuit states Abdul, a Grammy- and an Emmy-win-

**The lawsuit also accuses former 'American Idol' producer of sexually assaulting Abdul after she left the show. Lythgoe said he's shocked to hear of the allegations and will fight the smear**

ning artist, remained silent for years out of fear of retaliation by "one of the most well-known producers of television competition shows." In the lawsuit, Abdul says Lythgoe groped her in an elevator after a day of filming an early season of "American Idol" which premiered in 2002, and "began shoving his tongue down her throat." In the second instance, while they were on "So You Think You Can Dance", Abdul alleged Lythgoe forced himself on top of her during a dinner at his home and tried to kiss her.

### AROUND THE WORLD



**HIGH WAVES PUMMEL CALIFORNIA COAST:** A third day of rain, coastal flooding and gigantic waves along parts of the California coast have forced residents to evacuate and left streets and parking lots flooded. On Saturday, warnings of dangerous waves of up to 20 feet were in place for beaches and coasts in several counties, including LA and Santa Barbara. The US National Weather Service said 'slow improvements' were expected Monday

## Maine official who barred Trump from primary ballot falls prey to swatting call

A fake emergency call to police resulted in officers responding Friday night to the home of Maine secretary of state Shenna Bellows just a day after she removed former President Donald Trump from the state's presidential primary ballot under the Constitution's insurrection clause. She is the latest elected politician to become a target of swatting, which involves making a phone call to emergency services with the intent that a large first responder presence, including SWAT teams, will show up at a residence. Bellows was not home when the swatting call was made, and responding officers found nothing suspicious.

## Big Ben marks 100 years of New Year 'bongs'

London's Big Ben on Sunday marks the 100th anniversary of its "bongs" to ring in the New Year being broadcast live across the world. Ever since New Year's Eve 1923 when BBC engineer A.G. Dryland clambered onto a roof opposite the British



parliament to record the strikes, live transmission has become an annual tradition. While the rest of London is enjoying New Year's Eve, clock mechanic Andrew Strangeway will be at the top of the 96m Elizabeth Tower. He said he was very excited that he would be "right next to the bells when everyone is looking at that clock for the start of the New Year".

## How a British comedy turned from a German New Year TV tradition to an online trend

Berlin: "OK, the butler's setting the table", YouTuber Ryan Wass begins, sceptically. In his video "American Reacts to 'Dinner for One'", which he uploaded 11 months ago and now has 180,000 views, Wass takes a look at the cult comedy short. On his channel "Ryan Reaction", Wass regularly films himself being introduced to German idioms, customs, old films and TV shows from the perspective of an unwitting American viewer.

But "Dinner for One" is no ordinary slice of quirky Ger-

man culture. The 18-minute, black-and-white comedy of manners, filmed in 1963, is about a quintessentially British butler orchestrating a solo birthday celebration for his 90-year-old employer, whose closest friends and customary guests have all long since passed away. The butler, James, is obliged to fill in for the missing attendees, including quaffing each of their drinks. It's very British in style, and, apart from a brief German introduction, the action plays out in English.



**VIRAL CLASSIC:** May Warden and Freddie Frinton (L) in 'Dinner for One'

"I have more questions than I did before it started," Wass says as the screening comes to an end. "Like, how is this a Germ-

an tradition?" "Dinner for One" debuted on the British stage in the 1930s. German entertainer Peter Frankenfeld saw it in the early 1960s while looking for material that might resonate with a German audience, and organised a live taping in Hamburg. After airing sporadically over the next several years, the film lucked into being a fixture of New Year's Eve TV programming in the 70s. Over the decades, the tradition has spread: It also plays annually in Sweden, Denmark,

Austria and elsewhere. In Germany, "Dinner for One" screens on the TV channels of the country's many public broadcasters, sometimes several times a day on Dec. 31. Merchandise clogs German supermarkets: "Dinner for One" tea towels, puzzles and even an elaborate board game. Its ubiquity is unrelenting. If you own a TV in the country, you really can't miss it. Now, a generation of cord-cutters has also discovered the charms of this comedy, sharing and critiquing it online.

All over YouTube, "Dinner for One" reaction videos have become popular, racking up tens of thousands of views. TikTokers aren't just sharing clips from the film. They're also staging their own intricate parodies, making lighthearted spoofs that riff on the familiar format. Clearly, a younger audience wants to keep the joke going — whether that means turning it into an annual viewing party or imagining what "Dinner for One" may look like if it were made by Quentin Tarantino.



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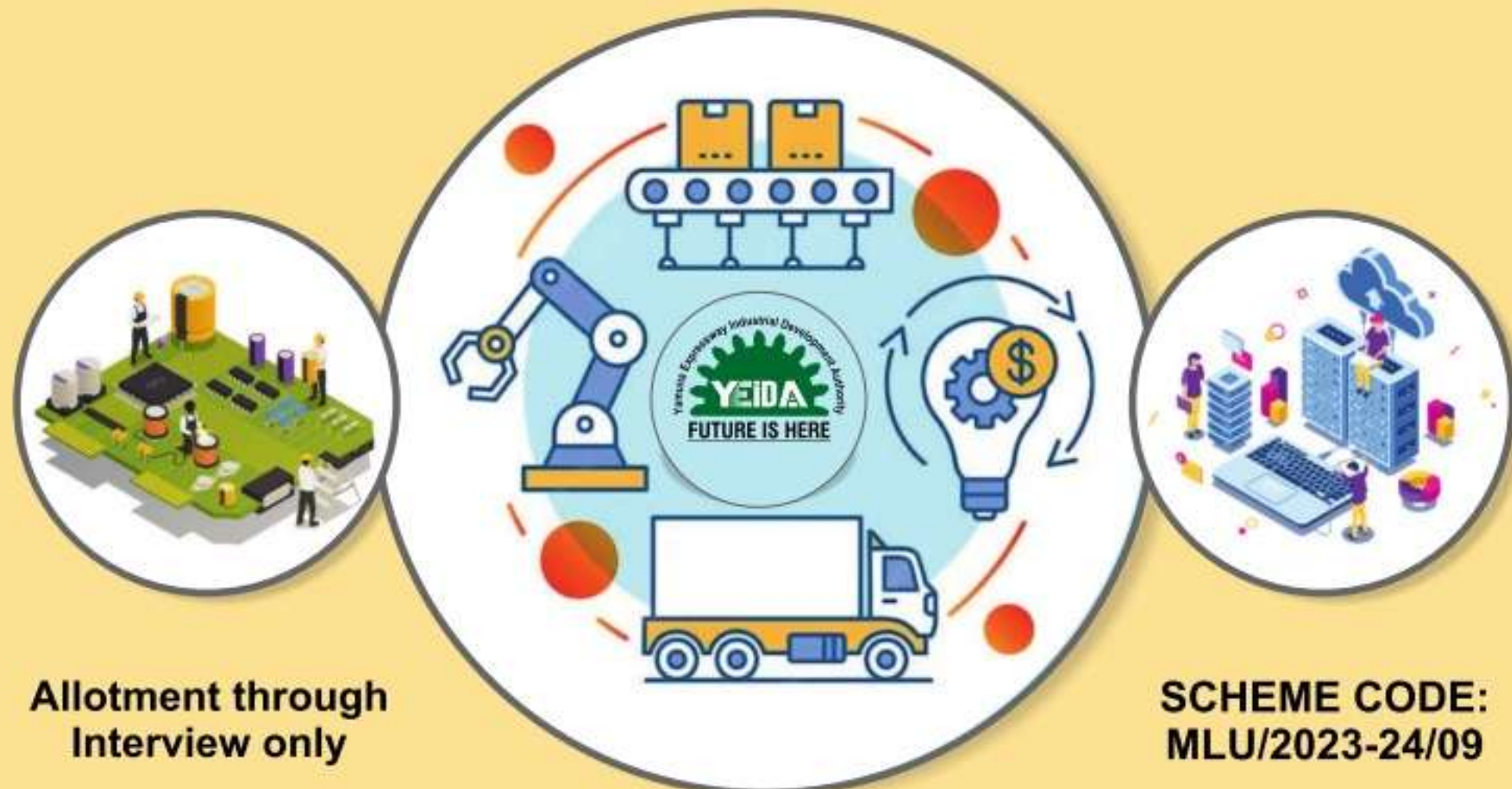
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# Unescorted 2-year-old adds to ‘donkey flight’ mystery

### No Trace Of Kid Now, Guj Cops Hunt For Him, Family

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**Ahmedabad:** Amidst the unfolding saga of the “donkey flight” grounded in France, one passenger stands out — a two-year-old boy from Gujarat who was onboard as an unaccompanied minor. However, he is now untraceable.

Gujarat police have launched an investigation to locate the child, identify his parents or guardians, and unravel whether he was part of a complex plan orchestrated by human smugglers, possibly facing a fate similar to the many children abandoned on the US-Canada border.

A Gujarat police CID officer said: “We have been trying to locate the child and his parents or guardians as many families have left their homes in north Gujarat.”

The flight to Nicaragua, carrying 303 passengers, including 96 from Gujarat, was grounded by French authorities in Vatry on December 21 over suspicions of human smuggling. A subsequent court order on December 24



Uma Kadam  
Passengers from the flight to Nicaragua, which was grounded in France on suspicion of human trafficking, returned to Mumbai last week. Gujarat police have launched a probe to unravel whether the child was part of a complex plan orchestrated by human smugglers

released passengers, with only 276, including 72 from Gujarat, landing in Mumbai.

Among the list of Indian passengers sent back, a copy of which TOI possesses, is a child born on August 2, 2021, from Gujarat, identified as an unaccompanied minor at Vatry airport. The source revealed that agents from Gujarat’s Mehsana and Gandhinagar facilitating illegal emigrations often establish fake families, with unrelated people posing as couples carrying someone else’s children.

This strategy aims to increase the likelihood of obtaining US asylum. “A couple with children is likely to get US asylum more easily,” the source said.

The investigation contemplates various scenarios, including instances where agents might have moved the

child’s parents first or where children are sent ahead to secure citizenship, allowing their parents to follow and apply for the same status. Besides the two-year-old, the flight included a ten-year-old and two 17-year-old boys listed as unaccompanied minors.

US Customs and Border Protection data reflects a concerning trend, with 730 unaccompanied Indian children found abandoned on US borders between 2020 and 2023, marking a significant 233% increase from 2020. Most of these children are between 10 and 14 years, but there have been instances of kids as young as four being found abandoned. In October 2023 alone, 78 children were discovered at borders, 73 on the Mexico border, known as the “donkey route”, and five on the Canada border.

### 3,000 illegal agencies are operating in India: MEA data

**Bengaluru:** As Gujarat police intensify efforts to capture the masterminds of the recently intercepted “donkey flight” in France, new data from the MEA sheds light on the prevalence of nearly 3,000 such unscrupulous agents/agencies across India, exploiting job seekers aspiring to work abroad, reports **Chethan Kumar**.

Among the 2,925 identified agencies, Gujarat has 56, and Karnataka has 80, but the states with the highest number of illegal agencies are Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Delhi, totalling 1,832.

“Donkey flight” refers to an illicit immigration method for unauthorised entry into countries like the US.

Despite regular advisories and actions taken against fake job offers, the issue persists, with 682 complaints received between January 2020 and November 2023. The complaints have been forwarded to state governments for investigation and prosecution under the Emigration Act 1983.

### Social boycott has no place in civilised society: Cal HC

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**Kolkata:** There is no place for social boycott of a citizen in a civilized society, the Calcutta high court said Wednesday while addressing a case where a man faced ostracism for reporting illegal temple construction in front of his property in the Arambag area of Bengal’s Hooghly.

“Any social boycott of a citizen or his family member has to be dealt with strictly by the administration. This has no place in a civilised society,” said Justice Jay Sengupta, directing police to maintain vigilant patrols to prevent any

**The HC was hearing a case where a man faced ostracism for reporting illegal temple construction in front of his property in Hooghly**

breach of peace or violation of the civil court order in the area.

Petitioner Ranajit Mondal owns property in Arambag and had raised concerns about the unauthorised construction of a temple in front of his premises. Somnath Mukherjee, his advocate, informed the court that despite filing a case, his client was facing disturbances, including social boycott by locals, including the respondents.

“This is not permissible in law,” Justice Sengupta firmly stated, while noting that Mondal had obtained an interim order of injunction against the construction in November 2022 from an Arambag civil court, which mandated a status quo for a passageway leading to the temple.

The HC emphasised that parties must address property-related issues through the civil court and not resort to taking the law into their own hands.

## Midnight rave party busted in Maha, 95 revellers held

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**Thane:** Police busted a rave party held at an isolated stretch in Thane’s Kasarwadavli creek, nearly 2km off the busy Ghodbunder road, in the wee hours of Sunday and detained 95 revellers, including five women, and arrested the two organisers.

Following a tipoff, police swooped down on the revelers — mostly students and call centre employees aged 19-30 — around 3am.

“The guests had allegedly consumed drugs and intoxicants at the illegally organised party. We seized small quantities of LSD, charas, ecstasy pills and several motorbikes from the spot, collectively valued at Rs 8 lakh,” said DCP (crime) Shivraj Patil.

The organisers — Tejas Kubal (23) and Sujal Mahajan (19) — and the 95 guests were booked under relevant sections of NDPS Act and Maharashtra Prohibition Act.

While the revellers were



Following a tipoff, police swooped down on the revellers, mostly students and call centre employees, and arrested two organisers

sent for medical examinations, issued notices and released, the two organisers were arrested. They will be presented before the local magistrate’s court Monday.

Kubal and Mahajan had posted an invite for the party on social media, which drew youngsters from Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane, Mira-Bhayander, said Patil. The access fee ranged between Rs 500 and Rs 1,000.

Vikas Ghodke, senior inspector of Thane crime branch unit-V, said, “Initial questioning revealed the accused had conducted a simi-

lar party at the same spot during Diwali and another in Goa. We are tracking the source of the contraband.”

Meanwhile, opposition leaders raised a furore over the incident in CM Eknath Shinde’s bastion.

Speaking to the media, Shinde clarified: “The opposition has no right to criticise us as we are regularly taking action on the drug cartel here. I have already ordered authorities to demolish all units that indulge in the sale of drugs and take strict action against those selling the contraband.”

## Regular worker & daily wager equal under Gratuity Act: HC

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**Bengaluru:** The Payment of Gratuity Act does not differentiate between a regular employee and a daily wage employee, Karnataka HC recently observed while directing the state government to settle arrears of a 75-year-old retired ‘D’ Group employee in relation to the period when he worked as a daily wager.

Allowing a plea filed by Basavegowda, Justice M Nagarasanna pointed out that the Supreme Court in Senior



ARREARS DISPUTE

Superintendent of Post Offices vs Gursewak Singh, had ruled in favour of Gramin Dak Sewaks though they were part-time employees.

Basavegowda joined Government High School, G Maligere, Mandya taluk, as a

Group-D employee on November 18, 1971. He was regularised in service on January 1, 1990. On retirement after about 42 years of service on May 31, 2013, he was paid Rs 1,92,700 as gratuity for his service from January 1, 1990.

Citing that he was not paid gratuity for 19 years, Basavegowda petitioned the Controlling Authority under the Gratuity Act. The Authority determined the gratuity arrears to be paid to him at Rs 2,40,449. After he was still not paid the arrears, he approached the high court.

## Big ticket buy: Actor Abraham acquires bungalow in prime Mum area for ₹75cr

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**Mumbai:** In another big ticket property purchase involving a Bollywood personality, actor John Abraham has sealed a deal to buy a bungalow on Linking Road, Khar. The cost: Rs 75 crore.

The property, 372 Nirmal Bhavan, is a ground-plus-two storey structure which belonged to Pravin Nathalal Shah and family.

According to IndexTap.com, the deal with the actor was signed on December 27 for an agreement value of Rs 70.8 crore. An additional



Uma Kadam  
Over Rs 4 crore was paid as stamp duty to buy Nirmal Bhavan

Rs 4.25 crore was paid as stamp duty. The land area is 7,722 sq ft while the bungalow’s area is 5,416 sq ft.

It is not known what Abraham plans to do with the prop-

erty. Property market sources said the plot is located in a prime area of Linking Road which commands one of the highest commercial property rates in the city. “Rentals for retail shops on Linking Road are in excess of Rs 800 per sq ft. It is one of the costliest retail markets in India,” said Pankaj Kapoor of Lias Foras.

Abraham is one of several Bollywood personalities heavily invested in real estate. In 2009, he bought a prime plot at Union Park near Petit School from a Parsi family, the Rattanshas. A source close to Abraham had earlier told TOI the actor has no immediate plans to build on the plot.

Actor Salman Khan too owns a four-floor commercial space on Linking Road, Santa-

cruz, which he bought for Rs 120 crore a decade ago. Experts said that since they are constantly in the limelight, Bollywood stars can rarely do a real estate deal, be it a sale or purchase, unnoticed.

Anuj Puri, chairman of Anarock Group, said several celebrities have also been seen selling their bungalows in prime areas such as Bandra, Juhu and Khar to developers, who then redevelop them into premium residences. “Celebrities sell their bungalows at a premium and take a share in the new built-up project. This trend is prominent. Developers, on their part, redevelop these bungalows into high-rises and sell at a premium, between Rs 70,000 to Rs 80,000 per sq ft.”





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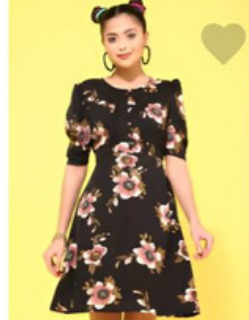
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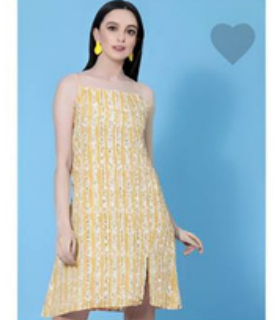
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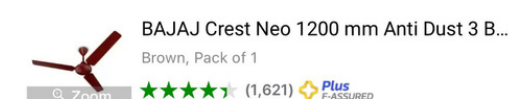
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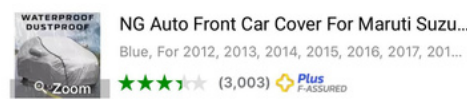


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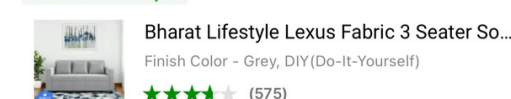
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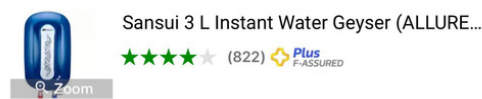


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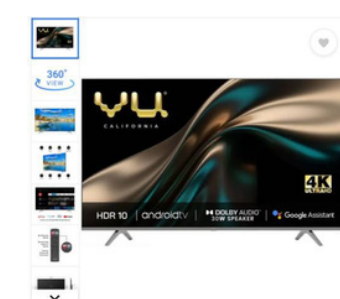


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